THE LIFE AND REMINISCENCES OF JESSIE BOND

THE OLD SAVOYARD

AS PHOEBE
IN 'THE YEOMEN OF THE GUARD'

THE LIFE AND REMINISCENCES OF

JESSIE BOND

THE OLD SAVOYARD

AS TOLD BY HERSELF TO ETHEL MACGEORGE

WITH 15 ILLUSTRATIONS

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PREFACE

IT is now about three years since first I said to myself, "I will write a book." I was even then an old woman of seventy-four, so you will agree with me that the project was fairly courageous. All through life I have loved adventure and tried my audacious hand at many things, and the writing of stories and articles has been one of them. I have had always a certain facility with my pen, my reputation as an actress ensured an editorial welcome for my efforts, and in their small way they were successful with the public. So in my pride and vainglory I said to myself, "I will write a book, the true story of my life."

But, alas, though the spirit was as willing as ever, years and sorrows had sadly weakened the flesh. My husband's death and the uprooting from my home of twenty-five happy years had deeply disturbed me; I was a

wanderer, unhappy, unsettled. I found that I could not write, my ideas would not crystallize, my memories were too fugitive and my pen refused to flow ; the physical labour of writing was the worst impediment of all. I found a refuge here in Worthing and tried again, but age and frailty are insurmountable.

But still in my mind was the idea firmly fixed, that I must tell the story of my life. Surely, I felt, it would interest a public that still loves the Gilbert and Sullivan Operas, and even outside that public the human story of a girl's ambitions and aspirations, of her struggle with adverse circumstances and the gradual attainment of her desires, must have value if told simply and sincerely. That I determined to do, to show myself as I am and tell the whole truth ; concealing nothing—why not, when there is nothing I need wish to conceal ? I am one of the last of my generation. I have outlived prejudices and animosities, and can look back on my own life as on an interesting story. That I have tried to make it. An absolutely true story of struggle and gradual attainment may perhaps encourage some weary

young aspirant, and to do that would alone make it well worth while.

So again I sat down to write my life, and again I found it impossible. Years are inexorable, but with spirit still undaunted I looked about me for help in my task. It was slow in coming; and more than once my hopes were raised only to be dashed down again. An old woman in a quiet seaside town, far from the centres of literary life, and too slow and feeble to work continuously with busy writers, cannot hope to command their services.

Repeated disappointments daunted even me, pertinacious little Jessie Bond, still full of ambitious schemes, but unable to carry them through. I tried to be contented in my little home, and to resign myself to fade out of life, leaving no lasting record. I worked in my garden and petted my beloved pussy, and every now and then enlivened myself by a visit to London.

"Are you not writing your life?" my friends asked, but I sadly acknowledged myself beaten: I had even resolved to sell the letters and other records which it now seemed useless to hoard up.

Then one day last summer I returned from London, after one of those periodical visits which are my delight. An empty flat, a cold hearth, only my faithful Billie to rub her silky sides against my ankles. That—and a letter on the floor.

"Some one who wants to come and be my secretary, to help me write my book. But no, the time has gone by, and I have put it all out of my mind. The book will never be written now."

So I decided, but fate had decided otherwise. I have found in life that what I urgently desire, but have perhaps given up hope of attaining, comes to me in the most miraculous way, as if dropped from the clouds. Almost literally things have sometimes done so. I will not enter into particulars, lest you should think me a credulous old woman in her dotage. But I have had experiences which bordered on the psychic, and the advent of Ethel Macgeorge, so mysteriously impelled to desert her sunny hill-side in France and link up her life with mine in this enterprise, has been one of them.

She had heard of my desire to write a book

and my need of help to do so, had come from London to see me and found me flown to London, but nothing daunted she had written announcing her intention of coming again. While I was still reading her letter, with Billie purring on my knee, there she was at the door, gently determined, full of hope and inspiration, reviving in me the desire to carry out a plan I had given up as hopeless of attainment.

Long we argued and contended; she, that the book must be written; I, that I was too old, that the time for it had gone by, and the effort now too great for me, but in the end she won.

I was glad to be convinced, the old enthusiasms inspired me once more, faded memories revived and forgotten events were as fresh in my mind as things of yesterday. We settled down to work together, I fought my battles all over again, lived and enjoyed my life once more in describing it to a sympathetic listener, and now I offer the history of it to you, in a last appearance before my kind and much-loved British Public.

JESSIE BOND

WORTHING, *November* 8, 1929.

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THE LIFE AND REMINISCENCES OF JESSIE BOND

THE OLD SAVOYARD

THE REMINISCENCES OF JESSIE BOND, THE OLD SAVOYARD

INTRODUCTION

A GENERATION has arisen that knows not Jessie Bond, and she feels that she must apologize for making yet another public appearance, after an interval of more than thirty years. But—the last of the old Savoyards, one of those who played on the opening night of "Pinafore"—have not her memories the power of recalling, if only for a moment, visions of a bygone day: the struggles and triumphs of those great spirits with whom she daily walked and talked, an echo of the song and laughter, the wit and wisdom, of the past?

You talk to-day of Gilbert and Sullivan "Revivals"; *I* belong to an age when as yet Gilbert and Sullivan were not. The musical world of my youth was dominated by Beet-

hoven and the great masters of Germany: Mendelssohn was a modern and Wagner was unknown.

The stage was at a low ebb, Elizabethan glories and Georgian artificialities had alike faded into the past, stilted tragedy and vulgar farce were all the would-be playgoer had to choose from, and the theatre had become a place of evil repute to the righteous British householder.

Oratorio was then at the height of its vogue, and Shakespearean drama as interpreted by the Kean, Macready, and Kendal school still held its public; but at the other extreme there were only farces or the transplanted operettas of Offenbach, Lecocq and other French composers, which were as a rule very indifferently rendered, and their librettos so badly translated that any wit or point the dialogue might have possessed was entirely lost.

A first effort to bridge the gap was made by the German Reed Entertainers, and then came experiments by Tom Robertson and other light comedy writers, but the novels of Dickens entertained the widest public of all. He taught the people to recognize types and enjoy whimsi-

calities, he revealed their oddities to themselves and to each other, and ruthlessly unveiled pet hypocrisies. England was learning to laugh again, merrily, happily, and without rancour, as she had not laughed since the spacious days of Elizabeth, before the Puritan and Hanoverian shadows fell on us.

It was into this England that young Gilbert was born, an England beginning to feel youthfully high-spirited, to resent conventions and to crave for amusement. "Punch" was in its infancy, and had not yet learnt that lighter benevolence of fun that makes it to-day a sure index of our essential sanity. Gilbert began to write his Bab Ballads, contributing them to various journals and then publishing separately, and developing that sureness of touch and ability to seize on the very root of a folly and hold it up for good-humoured inspection which served him so well in his later work. He taught us to laugh at ourselves—that most salutary form of laughter—he stripped cherished conventions to their bare bones, but if the framework were sound he left it for our respect. He tried his hand on plays and made

experiments in collaboration, but it was not until he met with Sullivan that the genius of either man had full play.

Sullivan was partly of Italian descent, and was born and bred in an atmosphere of music. His father was a bandmaster, and Kneller Hall was the dominating influence of his childhood, exchanged when he was twelve years old for the ecclesiastical and courtly precincts of the Chapel Royal. There he sang in the choir and learnt many things besides music, he found favour in high places and was definitely established as a youth of parts and promise. His first essays in composition were anthems and church music, of remarkable excellence for one so young ; but as his genius matured the scope of it widened, and he acquired that delicate facility in fitting sound to sense, that witty clarity and point, that made him the one man in all the world born to co-operate with Gilbert. A star danced—under that they both were born, and its influence brought them together.

Gilbert was feeling his way as a writer for the stage, and before meeting with Sullivan he had produced several comedies, of which one,

"La Vivandiere," was played at the old Queen's Theatre in Long Acre. For the German Reed Entertainments he wrote a little drama called "Ages Ago," set to music by Frederic Clay, composer of "I'll Sing Thee Songs of Araby," and by him dedicated to his friend, Arthur Sullivan. This little play is noteworthy as containing an idea afterwards expanded into "Ruddigore." These German Reed Entertainments, and the atmosphere which they created, had become a sort of hatching-ground for new ideas and meeting-place for the clever youth of the day, and it was at the Reed Gallery of Illustration in 1870 that Gilbert and Sullivan were made known to each other by Frederic Clay.

Sullivan had already tried his hand at collaboration and the lighter kind of music, and had discovered that Wit and Melody are heavenly twins. He had worked with F. C. Burnand and composed the musical setting of "Box and Cox," and it was pure chance that gave him Gilbert instead of Burnand for a permanent artistic partner. Their first joint piece was "Trial by Jury"—with

W. S. Penley as Foreman of the Jury—produced at "Miss Kelly's" Theatre in Dean Street, Soho. The stage director was Richard D'Oyley Carte, known then as a rising young concert promoter, so the Triumvirate was already complete. "Trial by Jury" was soon followed by "The Sorcerer"; the partnership was put on a business basis with a Board of Directors to supply funds; the Opera Comique in Wych Street, Strand, was taken on lease; and there "H.M.S. Pinafore" was produced in 1878.

Modestly begun and at first little noticed, the new venture was nevertheless an immediate success. London was ready for something new, tired of heavy tragedy and stale farce, and of French importations. Tom Robertson's comedies of domestic life were educating public taste for a more natural and realistic form of entertainment, and encouraging the decent middle-class, which desired neither to be harrowed nor shocked, but merely to be amused, to become habitual playgoers. Both actors and audiences needed educating in Gilbert's new theory of fun, which had thrown aside all the hoary traditions of the stage. He would have no

horseplay, no practical joking, no make-up of the crude, red-nosed order or ridiculous travesties of dress and manner. All must be natural, well-behaved and pleasant, and the actors were trained to get their effects by doing and saying absurd things in a matter-of-fact way, without obvious burlesque of the characters they were representing. A judge, a clergyman, an admiral, of ordinary appearance and manner, were found far more mirth-provoking when put into ridiculous situations than the pantomime clowns of the past. Audiences soon learned to share Gilbert's point of view, and actors had to cast aside conventional methods and adopt those of the determined young playwright.

Gilbert confesses to having learnt much of his stage-craft from Robertson, who was also busy training raw recruits in naturalism, and would have no rebellion in the camp. There was plenty of scope for the innovator. To-day it is difficult for us to imagine the stiff unreality of early dramatic representations—that it was permissible, for instance, when the actors were about to engage in conversation, for them to fetch chairs and place them before the foot-

lights, conduct their conversation sitting in a row like Christy Minstrels, then replace the chairs when it was finished !

Robertson swept away all such clumsiness ; he introduced natural action and grouping ; and Gilbert learnt partly from him and partly from experience and his own originality to think out every situation, every bit of business, grouping, and by-play, before ever the piece was ready for rehearsal ; with the result that his productions were neat, finished, artistically restrained, there was no confusion or vulgarity, no spot-lighting, no " star " was permitted to usurp attention and spoil the continuity and balance. One of the earlier Josephines protested that she as prima donna was accustomed to occupy the centre of the stage whenever she adorned it—a custom invariable in opera. " But this is only a very common farce," she was suavely informed, and had to adjust her dignity to the new ideas.

Gilbert would have no tampering with his conceptions or his completed work, but he carefully adapted parts to the actors who were to play them, and was by no means above using

suggestions or modifying details. He insisted on the strictest discipline in his company, and required from every member of it a self-sacrificing devotion to the perfection of the whole piece, and by his martinet methods he succeeded in building up such delicately finished works of art that I, one of the last of that carefully drilled band, am grieved when I see his masterpieces blurred and distorted by the modern producer. Surely they are works of art, though on a small scale; genre pictures complete in themselves, and should be left clear and unaltered to delight future generations and present to them a vision of a bygone day? Let young playwrights and musicians give us masterpieces of their own, and hold up a mirror to their own times in their own way, but leave the fine-wrought work of the past untouched.

Like many another genius, unapproachable in his own line, Gilbert imagined that his real strength lay in another direction. He hankered after serious playwriting, he was never contented to be just a humorist, he longed to write drama with a purpose, to teach, to

preach. The sentimentalist in him was always at war with the humorist, and had to be kept sternly in check. He wrote many plays, but none of them, except perhaps "Sweethearts," which is still sometimes performed, had more than a moderate success. He was not at his best in sustained effort, his librettos are all short, but the concentrated wit and humour packed into them make them perfect of their kind.

Sullivan has been much pitied for having to subdue his genius to the shackles of comic opera and write music to Gilbert's words and more or less under his direction; but the fact remains that each one of them did his best work in conjunction with the other, and their separate productions have not lived as the operas do. Nowadays Sullivan is having his revenge, if that were needed, for his music is far better known than are Gilbert's words. The operas are all too seldom performed and their wit is understood by comparatively few, but Sullivan's music is played by every band and orchestra in England. It is now the gay familiar air that recalls some Gilbertian quip to mind, and keeps it in our memory as a household word.

The lure of grand opera and serious music strongly attracted Sullivan, who was as much disposed to resent the limitations of comic opera as Gilbert was, and perhaps with more reason. If he had had a librettist as accomplished as Gilbert to accompany and inspire his excursions into those loftier spheres the result might have been very different ; but, as it is, the success of these attempts was only ephemeral and largely due to his already established reputation. It is chiefly by his light music that we know him now, those airy, tuneful, rippling melodies, sparkling with wit, and as flowing and natural, as daintily inevitable, as the song of a bird. He has caught the very spirit of English melody, created a modern folk-song of his own, and linked up our ballad music with the ballads of long ago. He has written hymns spiritual and spirited—" Onward Christian Soldiers " has led millions of warriors against the forces of evil—and some of his songs have a popular appeal that seems indestructible. In his youth, and while his reputation was still in the making, he was too ready to use words for his songs that were often quite unworthy of his

art, and at no time was his literary taste beyond question. His association with Gilbert undoubtedly improved it, and it is clear that the quality of his music always most sensitively responded to the influence of true poetry. His anthems and oratorios are among the treasures of church music, and the incidental music written for "The Tempest," "Henry VIII," and "Macbeth" has an individual existence now.

But Sullivan as a serious musician and Gilbert as a serious dramatist have no real or separate existence to the great mass of English-speaking people. They are for us indissolubly linked together in the bonds of wit and melody, a deathless pair who never can grow old. There were some in their own day—as there are now—who were scandalized by their levity or bewildered by the dazzlement of their wit. "Punch" failed to appreciate them—a failure which surely the Mr. Punch of to-day can hardly believe of himself—and Disraeli in his recently published "Letters" to two sisters is found to have said:

"Except at Wycombe Fair in my youth, I have never seen anything so bad as 'Pinafore.'

It was not even a burlesque ; a sort of provincial ' Black-Eyed Susan.' "

Chesterton says that Gilbert's satire was " too intelligent to be intelligible " to the majority. One might have expected Disraeli to be in the minority, but he was an old man and of alien blood, and burlesque was the accepted form of fun in his day. Much more surprising are the comments of Lewis Caroll on " Pinafore " as performed by children. His objections to the use of the " big, big D " now seem as funny as any of Gilbert's mock heroics. The creator of Wonderland, far from feeling at home in the topsy-turvy world of the operas, could write :

" How Mr. Gilbert could have stooped to write, or Sir Arthur Sullivan could have prostituted his noble art to set to music, such vile trash, it passes my skill to understand."

We may hope that time and better acquaintance with the operas modified the severity of Caroll's opinion, but Disraeli did not live to see and feel the influence these merry trifles have had upon their age. They are not deep, they are not oppressively learned, they do not obviously tilt at abuses, in fact they make no

pretensions whatever, they merely seek to amuse; yet they, their history, meaning, the lives and motives of their creators, have given rise to such floods of talk and literature, such endless speculations, that the impression they have made upon our national life is abundantly evident.

Gilbert, the Jester, has been and is a Force, a new light on current events and age-old conventions. We still laugh at his pungent witticisms as did the Savoy audiences who in the old days "roared their ribs out," but the winged jest left behind it an idea, a stimulation, a leaven working slowly and surely, and has helped us to evolve that national mentality of which George Bernard Shaw is at present the most prominent mouthpiece. We have changed, we have grown, but I think we shall not soon outgrow the Gilbert and Sullivan operas, they are gems adorning our country as beautifully in their own way as do any of our national treasures of literature and art. Let us be thankful for their lustre, thankful above all for their priceless gift of kindly laughter, which is one of the best gifts of the gods to a labouring world.

CHAPTER I

WILL you listen to an old woman's story, dear people who remember me in my prime, and you others to whom I am only a name, but a name connected with so much that is mirthful and gay? Who does not laugh happily at the whimsicalities of "Pinafore" and "Patience," of "Iolanthe" and "Ruddigore," of "The Yeomen of the Guard" and "The Gondoliers"? Pure fun with no sting in it, leaving no bad taste in the mouth. What a bright spirit conceived that fun, what a master of humorous melody set it to music, what jolly, talented folk interpreted it and first made it visible and audible to the enraptured London of their day!

And I was one of that bright band—I, now a little old woman of nearly seventy-seven. I danced and sang and coquetted with the best, and all the people loved me. They do so still,

as I dare to think, when I revisit my old haunts and am received with open arms and acclamations. They are all gone now, my fellow-actors and companions, I only am left to speak from personal knowledge of that brilliant episode. For twenty years without a break I played in Gilbert and Sullivan's delightful operas—longer than any of my fellow-artists—and now I sit down to write about it all, the only woman of our company who has attempted the task.

So, now, will you listen to the story of my long life, chequered with joy and sorrow and hope and despair like all lives, but perhaps with brighter patches than most. All that was best in that London of last century I have tasted : I have seen my ambitions realized and my wildest hopes fulfilled ; I have known great sorrow also. Now I look back on it all through a mist of memories, an old woman resting from the labours of a lifetime, in a quiet nook where the velvet Downs meet the ever-youthful sea. But there's life and fun in me yet, and it does not take much to stir my old blood and bring back the days when I was the idol of the town, when cries of " dear Jessie " resounded from

the gallery, and foolish youths—and oldsters too—laid poems and garlands and offerings of all sorts at my feet.

I am a thorough-going Cockney, born within sound of the Bow Bells, at Camden Town on January 10, 1853. What a long while ago, and what a different Camden Town! They christened me at St. Pancras Church, and I believe I was always an obstreperous young person, with a passion for getting on in life, and no gift for being seen and not heard. My dear father and mother gave me the happiest childhood to remember and look back on, they were my truest friends and jolliest companions. My mother used to sing me to sleep with quaint rhymes and folk-songs, crooned in a sweet, natural, untrained voice, something individual and characteristic of her bright and witty self:

"Where have you been all the day, my boy Billy,
Where have you been all the day?"
"Courting of a lady gay,
Though she be but a young thing, just left her mammy."

I can hear her yet, through a mist of years, as once I heard her through a mist of dreams.

My father, bearded like the patriarchs of old,

was a sound musician and a maker of pianos for the trade, especially for Broadwood, so that I grew up in a musical atmosphere, and I and my brothers and sisters soon learnt to play and sing, and to take our parts in a home orchestra comprising violins and a cornet as well as piano. My mother had a great love for the theatre, and used to march us children off to hear and see plays as well as operas, though I at least was so young that often I fell asleep with my head on her shoulder. Nevertheless she considered it part of our education, and we early became familiar with the operas, oratorios and other music popular at that time. My father used to hum airs to us and offer pennies to the one who could place them. "What air is this? From what opera? Who wrote it?" And it was oftenest the perky little Jessie who answered correctly, and amassed pennies by the dozen, her first professional fees.

I loved acting too, and used to organize dramatic performances in our kitchen, with Father and Mother as the amused audience, and my brothers and sisters under my energetic stage management. Our costumes were im-

provised from night-gowns and Mother's dresses and anything that came handy, and to this day my fingers bear the scars of wounds contracted during the manufacture of most realistic daggers. I was all for realism and the unities, and any lapse from the ideal grievously hurt my artistic soul. I remember a boy who used to act with us, a hunchback he was, and very conceited, proud as a peacock of his cloak with a red satin lining. In the play he had to be killed in a duel, but after being dead for fully ten minutes he discovered that the red satin lining was not showing, and carefully turned back a corner of his cloak. My disgust and fury were beyond bounds; never had my artistic sensibilities been so affronted.

When I was six years old we went to live in Liverpool, and it was there that I first appeared in public. The piano was my instrument then, and when I was eight years old I played a Beethoven Sonata at a concert in Hope Hall—auspicious name! I was so small that they had to lift me on to the piano stool, but my performance was received with great favour, and was rapturously encored. Then

came a clash of wills with my music master, Mr. Isouard Praeger. He wished me to play as encore a piece that he could accompany on the violin, but I insisted that I must play "Lily of Killarney," and play it alone. Picture to yourself the small creature arguing behind the scenes with a large and angry music master, while the audience vociferously cheered in front! I stuck to my guns. I would play alone or not at all, and I had my way, wilful little devil that I was. The dominant spirit and egoism of the artist shown thus early!

The "Liverpool Daily Courier," in describing this concert, said: "Miss Jessie Bond, daughter of Mr. John Bond of Norton Street, showed remarkable knowledge of notation, time, and style." Another critic, writing in the "Tomahawk," said: "Miss Jessie Bond performed with a spirit and taste, the like of which I never heard equalled in one so young. Her solo was re-demanded in a style which must have frightened the little creature." (Not at all, my dear man, I enjoyed it.) "She is a regular Arabella Goddard in miniature."

Comparison with Arabella Goddard was in-

deed a compliment in those days. She was the most admired pianist of her time, whom not to have heard was to be an outsider in artistic society. She it was who first made Beethoven's later pianoforte music well known and popular in England.

My father was not well off, and as soon as we children could help ourselves and him we had to do so. For me, music teaching was the obvious way, but I hated it. I have never been any good as a teacher, and the necessity of having to do what I did badly made me desperately impatient and discontented. Routine and monotony were repulsive to me; and, then as always, I hated domesticity.

One day my mother took me to see an old servant who had married, and recently had her first baby. Well do I remember the little tidy, frugal house and the woman with her infant, and I observed it all with the supercilious arrogance of fifteen.

"Oh, mother," I said, as we were walking home, "never, never let me have a little house, and a little perambulator, and a little baby, and an iron on the kitchen mantelpiece!"

I don't know why that flat-iron on the mantelpiece seemed to me the last outrage on human dignity, but so it was.

Before I was seventeen I became engaged to a quite ordinary good young man, more because he kept on asking me and romance was beginning to stir in my breast than because of any inclination towards him personally. He was called William and was quite a nice lad, and my parents had no objection to our engagement so long as we were prepared to wait until I was at least eighteen years of age. So that for me the little house and the perambulator, and perhaps even the iron on the mantelpiece, seemed imminent at one time. But here my good fairy took the matter in hand, my voice began to develop and my parents had it carefully trained, and a prospect of release both from teaching and from domesticity seemed to be opening up.

About this time an advertisement appeared in the daily papers, asking for young singers to join a Choral Society recently formed in Liverpool, and my mother thought it would be a good opportunity for me to learn concerted

singing and gain experience. The idea should have appealed to me, but somehow it didn't. I don't know what mysterious reluctance held me back, what instinct urged me to avoid the most unhappy experience of my life. All unwillingly I sallied forth with my mother to interview the Director, but when she got near the place she found she had forgotten the number of the house and, though I remembered it quite well, I did not tell her. My obstruction availed me nothing, however, for she consulted the newspaper again, and next day we went to the address indicated.

Never shall I forget my first sight of the Director, Herr F. A. Schotlaender. A tall, massive man, with a look of power and intellect, he stood with his elbow on some piece of furniture and his head resting on his hand. His eyes seemed to pierce me, I was attracted and repelled at the same time, and deeply disturbed. I am sure I did not fall in love at first sight, what I felt was dread and a foreshadowing of evil ; but it was also enlightenment, a glimpse of another and wider world

than I had known, and a different standard to judge men by.

As we went home after that most disturbing interview I thought of my humdrum fiancé, poor, raw, young William, and decided that I never could marry him now. Pale shadows cannot stand before the robust strength of reality, and even those few minutes in the company of Schotlaender had revealed to me the existence of a type of man never before encountered. I wrote to William and broke off the engagement ; when he called I locked myself into my bedroom and refused to see him. Entreaties were useless, I hardened my heart against him and sent back all his presents. My parents were indignant and thought I was behaving disgracefully, as perhaps I was, but a glimpse of a bigger world had been vouchsafed to me, and there was no contenting myself with outworn beliefs.

That was the end of poor William as a factor in my life, though I met him again long afterwards. He consoled himself in due course, married and had two children and was prosperous in his worldly affairs ; then his wife died

and he came to London and proposed to me again, after all those years ! I can say with pride, but I think without vanity—for truth and devotion to one's unworthy self makes one feel very humble—that many men have loved me, not lightly or with fickleness, but faithfully and long.

CHAPTER II

A NEW era began for me under Schotlaender's influence. I joined his Choral Society and found the training and experience most valuable, my voice improved rapidly and I was soon appearing at concerts in Liverpool as "the new local contralto."

At that time what were called "Penny Readings" and "Sixpenny Readings"—mixed entertainments of music, recitations, and readings—were popular institutions in almost every town and village of England, and excellent were the programmes provided for those small sums. One day a gentleman called at our house and asked me if I would like to sing at a Penny Reading which was being arranged in Liverpool. There was perhaps a certain tone of patronage in the question which put my naughty little back up, for I answered pertly that I did not mind singing,

but that it would have to be at a Sixpenny Reading !

At a Sixpenny Reading I did appear in due course, and piped a pretty little trifle called " Maggie's Secret," to the great content of the audience. My voice must have been very slender in those days, but it evidently pleased. The chairman when thanking the performers especially mentioned me, saying, " I predict a great future for little Miss Jessie Bond."

While still in my early teens I began to give concerts on my own, and my efforts were most kindly received by the Press. I don't know whether it was the work of my management or my own bright idea, but the concerts were advertised as under the patronage of an imposing list of local magnates ; M.P.'s, J.P.'s, and T.C.'s—even one F.S.A. ! I am sure they were all very kind and rather amused, but glad to give a helping hand to an audacious little girl whose ambition had no limits.

Looking back to that period, I remember with grateful affection my teacher, Pilotti, whose method of voice production did so much to improve and strengthen mine. While he

taught me singing I was still studying the piano under Praeger, who was not married, and perhaps that was the reason my parents thought it necessary for me to have an escort at my lessons. For this purpose one of my father's apprentices was told off, a gawky youth much older than myself, who probably resented me as I despised him. For, as you will have already perceived, the Lord early gave me a good conceit of myself, and I said, "I won't have him walking beside me, he must walk behind"; so he was constrained to trudge humbly in the rear, carrying the music of the cocky little songstress.

In those days women and non-Catholics frequently sang in Roman Catholic church choirs, and the story of my admission to the Seel Street Benedictine Church Choir is a curious one, intimately connected with the after-course of my life. One day a well-known solicitor, leader of the choir, called on me at my parents' house. He had received a letter from me, he said, and understood from it that I needed help in my profession. I had written no such letter, and neither I nor my parents

had ever thought of applying to him ; but the conversation which followed drew us together and, though not a Catholic, I was engaged to sing in his choir.

We discovered afterwards that it was Schotlaender, director of the Choral Society, who had written the letter and was working in this underhand manner to give me another chance of proving my abilities. All this time he had been making love to me in his dominating, egotistical way ; and I, being young, was proud of having attracted a man of his age and attainments. My father made inquiries about him and told me he was a bad lot—which information I promptly passed on to Schotlaender ! He became more wary and secret in his dealings with me ; but even that did not warn me of my danger. I was not yet seventeen ; only an ignorant child, dazzled by the man's intellectual qualities and hypnotized by his personality, but by no means in love with him. He was persistent ; but I put him off and my father forbade our engagement, at any rate until I had grown a little in years and wisdom.

For two years I sang in the Seel Street Choir. Those years comprised the unhappiest period of my life, though my associations with the church itself were most happy. From all connected with it, priests and laymen alike, I met with the greatest kindness, although I was a heretic. The leader was a thorough musician and very interested in me, he worked me hard and tested my powers remorselessly. He used to compose melodies while the service was going on and jot them roughly down ; then stick them up in front of me to sing at sight during the offertory !

One curious thing I remember about that choir is that among its members were a Miss Pepper and a Miss Salt ; a Miss Haddock and a Mr. Jelly.

In the early days of my connection with the choir, before my reputation was fully established, I was given a part in a trio to be sung at an important service. My father and mother were to be there to hear it, and I was full of hope and excitement in my rising fortunes. On the great day I arrived at the side door leading to the organ loft. A cab was

drawn up to the kerb, and Schotlaender stood in the doorway of the church ; waiting, as I thought, to encourage me and wish me success.

To my astonishment he pushed me into the cab. " Why—why——" I protested incoherently, " I shall be late," but my angry resistance was unheeded. There was another man with him—I think he drove the cab—anyhow, off it went, and my cries and protestations were drowned by the noise of the wheels. We went to the other man's house, where his sister received me, and there I was kept for the night.

After all these years I forget what were Schotlaender's arguments and plausible reasons, how he overbore my will and persuaded me that I was compromised or something—anything—to convince me that marriage was inevitable. I was only a child, knowing nothing of the world, an easy prey to a man of that character. I forget much of the past, but I remember as if it were yesterday my anguish at the thought of my parents' sorrow, waiting there in the church to hear me sing ; and I not there, snatched from their dear arms and from my home.

Next day I was taken to Manchester, and there we were married. I suppose I had sense enough left to insist upon that. I wrote to my parents—what a story their unhappy daughter had to tell! After a short interval we returned to Liverpool, Schotlaender had his professional engagements to fulfil, and I had mine. His programme was, of course, that I should rise to fame and fortune and bear him with me.

We lived in misery. His pretence of love-making soon came to an end, he only wanted me to work for him; and I no doubt was sullen, bitter, tempestuous—rebellious in every possible way. He ill-treated both my mind and my body, he denied me every comfort, often I had not even enough to eat. To add to my wretchedness, the inevitable baby was coming, and even my youth and splendid health could not support that added burden. My sister came to see me one day and found me in the throes of domestic tragedy. He had been violently ill-treating me, I was a broken, pitiful creature.

She went home and told my parents; they came and found me in bed, worn out and

despairing. My dear parents, what grief for them to see their petted child in such a case !

" This can't go on," my father said, and I sobbed :

" No, I can bear no more of it."

So, stealing away from him as furtively as once he had stolen me, I left Schotlaender after ten miserable months, and went home to my parents' house.

Never, never shall I forget their welcome. Old as I am, tears rain down my cheeks still when I recall that scene. My father took me by the shoulders and strained me to him in such an agony of love and pity, I can feel the pressure yet.

Soon after, my baby was born. I was very ill and almost demented ; when it died at three months old I did not greatly care. Poor little victim of brutality, cruelty and lust !

It may seem an almost incredible piling up of misery, but before I had recovered from the birth of my child smallpox was added to my other ills. The doctor who attended me had smallpox patients as well; he neglected the proper precautions, and passed the disease on

to me. It was a wonder I had strength enough left to battle through that also, but I did, and even escaped without disfigurement, fortunately for my future.

Then came a time of calm and recovery. I was surrounded by love and care, my bruised spirit revived. Schotlaender faded from my life, only once was he admitted to see me, soon after the child was born.

"When will you be ready to get up and sing?" he asked.

"Never. Never again for you," I answered, and I kept my word. My father's protection was too strong for him; public opinion also, perhaps. At any rate he did not trouble me again until long afterwards, when fame and fortune had really arrived and I was singing at the Savoy. No doubt his fingers itched to close on my fees, and he cursed his senseless cruelty, and the ill-luck of having killed the goose that laid the golden eggs. He wrote, he tried to see me. I went to my father and told him the danger that threatened.

Often, during those years of separation, my father had urged me to sue for a divorce; but

in those days divorces were rare and disgraceful. I shrank from the publicity and the whole dirty business ; and, as for freedom to re-marry, I wanted none of it. I was sick and tired of men, and of so-called love in all its manifestations. But now danger threatened me just as I had the ball at my feet, for in law my husband could compel me to live with him, and could take all my earnings.

So I consented to sue for a divorce ; and it was granted easily enough, the evidence was overwhelming.

CHAPTER III

NOW I must go back to the period following the birth of my child. I stayed on in my father's house, and as soon as I was strong enough I began to take singing lessons again and to seek for concert engagements ; I also gave piano lessons, for it was necessary to earn a living. It was then that the kindness of those dear people at the Seel Street Benedictine Church so comforted my sore heart. I sang in their choir, I also sang in oratorio for the Società Armonica, and in the Sacred Concerts of the National Sunday League.

It is strange that at such a period of my life it should have been my fate to sing so much classical and devotional music. I think that these things fall into their places for us, what we are ready and fit for is given us to do. My sorrows, and the deepening of character that sorrow brings, gave power and pathos to my

singing. No one who has not suffered can rightly interpret the sufferings of others, or speak intimately to the sad heart.

My reputation as a singer of feeling and spirituality became firmly established, as a criticism in one of the local papers will show. The writer begins by remarking: "It is a singular fact that the majority of the local leading vocalists and organists in the Roman Catholic choirs are non-Catholics, many being attracted by the superior practice. . . . The contralto (Miss Bond) has a voice that speaks to the very heart in some of the prayerful solos selected for her; tone and expression are always touching and true, and never since the Ave Marias as spoken rather than sung by Miss W—— in this church have we heard such truly tender renderings of sacred subjects as her rendering of Rossini's 'Fac ut Portem' and Cherubini's 'O Deus, ego amo te.'"

The first oratorio in which I took part was "The Messiah," rendered by the Società Armonica, a very important musical organization in those days. It was in January, 1872, when I was just nineteen, but mature

beyond my years. A criticism of the concert said : " Miss Bond, who has a contralto voice of considerable compass, sang the beautiful airs ' He shall feed His flock,' and ' He was despised,' with great pathos and pathetic sweetness."

From that time onward I sang in many oratorios, and in all Haydn's and Mozart's Masses. I remember singing in " Elijah," in " Samson," in " Athalie," in " Stabat Mater," and in " Jephthah." Probably there were others which I cannot now remember, for in those days the public loved oratorio. There were then few theatres and no cinemas ; nothing to divert the attention and spoil the taste for classical music fostered by so many vocal and instrumental societies. The National Sunday League, in particular, gave magnificent concerts. The object of this movement was to secure for the people intellectual and elevating Sunday recreation, to promote excursions and entertainments, to arrange for the opening of Art Galleries, Museums and Libraries, and generally to cheer up the dismal Victorian Sunday. Those were revolutionary

aims and ideas at the time when many even of those who secretly hated its dullness were constrained by convention and custom to make it a day of penitential boredom. But the movement succeeded, as it was bound to do, being part of the general movement and change in social ideals—and one of its most striking and elevating manifestations were these splendid concerts, which brought into so many thousands of grey lives the purest and most spiritual of pleasures.

It seems to be still the North that best supports these great musical associations, the land of desolate, wind-swept moors and peat-stained torrents, of smoking chimneys and grey streets echoing to the sound of wooden shoon. There is something in the hardy Northern folk that instinctively responds to music—that divine breath of the spirit, blowing where it listeth.

It was in those concert-singing days that I first met one of the North's most musical children—Charles Santley, sweetest singer of his day. That event was distinctly a milestone on the road of my life. He was to me a true and a powerful friend, he advised and directed me

and used his influence on my behalf, and all so kindly and so willingly that it is impossible for me to be sufficiently grateful. We have even sung on the same platform, an honour for me of which I am deeply conscious. He knew that I was ambitious and not very happy ; my marriage had unsettled me ; life in my father's house now seemed too constrained ; I had to teach for my living, which I profoundly hated and did badly.

" Why don't you go to London and study at the Royal Academy ? " he asked me one day, after hearing me sing. To do that had long been my ambition, but I had thought to devote myself to the piano. However, Santley advised me rather to develop my voice and make a name as a contralto, taking the piano only as a second subject. He was kind enough to discuss the matter with my father, who was then as always willing to do anything in his power for my happiness and advancement, and so it was arranged that I was to go.

I jumped at the chance, not only because I really wanted to study in London, but because I had got myself into another pickle at home.

I hope you will not think me too vain if I say that always there have been lovers and would-be husbands doing their best to disturb the course of my life and direct it into the same channels as their own. It is a curious thing, because I never wanted them, and can honestly say I never tried to attract them even for fun or to prove my power ; and of my two marriages one, as you know, was entered into most unwillingly, and the second, happy one, only after years of waiting.

In Liverpool, not long after the tragic sequel of my first marriage, and while I was still legally the wife of Schotlaender, I met a young man of good family, the cadet of a noble house, who was trying his luck as a cotton broker in the North. He fell in love with me and pestered me into an engagement. I am ashamed to say that I have been engaged over and over again ; when I was young it seemed to be the only way to keep these persistent lovers quiet, so I used to say yes for the sake of peace, never meaning it. This young man did all in his power to get me, he knew I could free myself from my first marriage at any time I

liked, and urged me to do so. His sister came and joined her entreaties to his. I would not go to stay with her as she wished, but between the two of them they pushed me into an engagement. If it had stopped there I should have just drifted on, but he was bent on marriage, and even began to prepare a house for me—that gave me a fright. What, live always a humdrum life in Liverpool: keep house, look after servants, have children, no, no, no! Then came Santley's suggestion and my father's consent; it was a heaven-sent deliverance and I was off as joyously as a bird freed from a cage.

Even then I had not shaken off my lover, he exhausted himself and me in entreaties, and when I started on my journey he got into the train with me and went half-way to London, begging me to change my mind and go back. It was a terrible affair, I was in tears, he, wild-eyed and desperate. Whatever did the other people in the carriage think of us, I wonder? But he gave it up at last, and I finished my journey alone.

I was then over twenty-one years of age and

no raw girl, but a woman with bitter experience of life, and well armed against the usual dangers that beset country girls in London. Young as I was, love and marriage were things of the past for me, they had moulded my character and deepened my artistic qualities, but they were done with, my mind was the stronger for them, and open and free for other thoughts.

My life in London began humbly enough, in straitened circumstances and with the usual makeshifts and difficulties of the struggling young artist. My dear father paid for my classes and gave me a pound a week to live on —and I made it do. Would that be possible now, I wonder? Fifteen shillings went to pay for board and lodging, the rest was pocket-money, dress, everything—and so I lived, rather like a sparrow on a branch.

My particular branch was in the house of a man who had courted one of my mother's friends in her youth. Both the man and the girl married some one else, but the acquaintance was kept up, and, when my parents were casting about for some safe harbourage for me in London, this man was found willing to

receive me into his family. He had three daughters and they all slept in the same room; a little bed in the corner of it was assigned to me, so there were the four of us together. My fifteen shillings a week paid for that and for my food, not very dainty fare as you may imagine, but sufficient for me, I never was a lover of the flesh-pots. I was quite happy with them all and shared what they had or went short of as one of the family, I studied hard and was too busy to notice deficiencies. There were always my own clothes to make and mend, for everything I wore then and for years afterwards was made by my own hands. I did my little laundry work in hand-basins as girls in lodgings do, and darned my stockings until often there was more darn than stocking.

When anything was left out of that very hard-worked five shillings of pocket-money I took a penny bus and went to the theatre, oftenest to the opera at Covent Garden, waiting there in the queue with other penniless enthusiasts, mounting the steep, ill-lighted stairs with a merry heart, and sitting spell-bound under the charm of those Italian operas

that one seldom hears now. An evening of bliss, forgetful of past troubles and present hardships, then home again on my penny bus —if it wasn't too full—if it was I had to walk, sometimes in pouring rain. But what did that matter? I had spent an evening in Paradise, and I slipped out of my wet clothes and into my little bed, and slept and dreamed of a glorious future.

Such was my life as one of that busy household in Percy Street, Tottenham Court Road, and I believe the old house stands there yet.

One of the boys of that family was severely stage-struck, and later became a fairly successful concert promoter. In those early days of his enthusiasms he hired a schoolroom somewhere in St. Martin's Lane, and got up a one-night show in which I acted. For that occasion I adopted the high-sounding name of Carlotta Romaine, using my own second Christian name of Charlotte, and the maiden name of my grandmother.

All this time Santley's kind interest in me never flagged, he was always ready with suggestions and advice, and with more practical

help. It was his idea that I should enter myself for the Westmorland Scholarship at the Academy of Music. To win that would have been an immense help to me financially, not to mention the creditable position as a rising musician that it would have carried with it.

But I did not win it. Perhaps the feeling of all that it meant unnerved me, perhaps I had over-studied and under-fed, I cannot remember now, but at the examination I suffered from a complaint to which I have never before or since been liable—from stage-fright. An Italian aria was given me to sing, but try as I would I could not sing in tune. They were all so kind, they encouraged me and let me try again and again. "Let her try again, let her try again," said Sir Alexander Mackenzie indulgently; he must have seen how frightened I was, and how unable to do myself justice. Three chances they gave me, but I could not sing it, my intense desire to succeed was my undoing.

Poor dear Santley was bitterly disappointed, he had said so many kind things about me, and I had disgraced myself and him too. The only

course now was to go in for the ordinary entrance examination at the Academy, and perversely enough, now that the urgency of fear was removed, I passed with flying colours. One of the tutors offered to accompany my song, but with spirits rising again I said with my usual self-sufficiency that he would probably put me out, and I sat down at the piano and played and sang "Nobil Signor" with complete success.

Then began a very happy year of hard study. My singing master was Manuel Garcia, the best teacher of his day, who had once taught Jenny Lind. When he scolded me—as he often did—I used to retort, "Well, every one isn't a Jenny Lind, you know." A sign of grace that, in me—recognition of the fact that I had superiors!

Garcia was then over eighty, he was crochety and irritable, his outbursts of temper used to upset his pupils and make them cry. It was rather a satisfaction to him, I think, to look round a circle of weeping femininity and feel his power. But it was a satisfaction that I never gave him, however harshly he rated

me, and one day, exasperated by my want of sensibility, he said to me :

" Why don't *you* cry ? "

" Because I want my lesson, please, Signor," was my matter-of-fact reply.

Not satisfied with lessons and study, I seized every chance of singing in public, and thus gaining practical experience. I sang with or without fees for whoever would employ me. Very often I was paid, but if not, no matter, I sang all the same. I accepted engagements to appear at band concerts all over the country, perhaps on one occasion only at each place ; but no journey was too long and no conditions were too hard for me. I sang in private houses, I sang for charity concerts, wherever I could get a hearing ; and gradually I established my position and got better engagements. In those days we young singers had to work long and hard at our profession ; to have a pretty face and neat ankles was not enough then, though, for stage work at least, it seems to be the chief thing to-day. Not for us the fat salaries and easy conditions that singers enjoy now. I have known what it was to want

a meal, and have lived and dressed myself on a sum that would not keep a girl of to-day in silk stockings. *We* did not show our legs—that would have been quite too shocking !—and it was certainly cheaper to keep them covered.

Gradually my position improved, I was referred to in the Press as "the celebrated R.A.M. contralto," and sang at such places as Sheffield, Harrogate, Brighton, Scarborough, Douglas, Manchester, and even in the grand concerts at the Crystal Palace, that goal of a young artist's ambition. I was a great favourite at Scarborough, and frequently sang at the concerts held in the Aquarium there, which was open in those days from ten in the morning until ten at night ; and, rather appropriately, my most successful song was entitled "The Deep, Deep Sea."

In London I sang at the Flute Soirées and Concertina Concerts held in the Langham Hall —what memories these names may recall to the concert-goers of a bygone day !—and one concert at which I appeared, in the Queen's Theatre, Long Acre, deserves special mention. It was held in July, 1877, and one of the items

on the programme was an exhibition of the wonderful electric instrument, "The Telephone," invented by Mr. Cromwell F. Varley. Melodies played in the Canterbury Hall, Westminster Bridge Road, were audible in the Queen's Theatre, and an explanatory address was given by Professor Field. What a long way we have travelled since then!

During that London era I sang nearly every Sunday for the Theosophical Society, whose services were conducted by the Reverend Charles Voysey, at their church in Swallow Street, off Regent Street. It was there that I first met the young soprano, Leonora Braham, with whom I was afterwards associated for so many years at the Savoy.

All this time my dear friend, Santley, had never ceased to help and encourage me, and my rising fortunes gave him sincere pleasure; but it is rather amusing to remember that, just at the time when he was encouraging me as a singer, Sir Julius Benedict was urging me to concentrate on the piano. So may doctors of music as well as doctors of medicine disagree.

At this time, also, I became acquainted with

many other musicians and singers whose names will be familiar to readers of my own generation: such as Ben Davies, Hermann Vezin, Miss Cora Stuart, Signor Frederici, Mr. James O'Hara, Mr. Snazelle, Van Biene the 'cellist already famous by reason of his "Broken Melody," and Madame Odoardo Barri, of the New York Academy.

Mention of Madame Barri recalls to my mind one of the provincial tours in which she was a member of a party including also a fiery Spaniard named Signor Urio. This man fell violently in love with me, and declared his passion with Southern ardour. When I repulsed him he threatened to shoot me, and it really did seem as if tragedy was imminent. Fortunately Madame Barri was there to befriend me, I locked myself into my room and she guarded me and brought me food at intervals, until my inconvenient admirer had been got rid of, and induced to transfer himself and his emotions to another company.

A concert which greatly influenced the after-course of my life was held at St. George's Hall, Portland Place. I sang, and was well received ; "She Wore a Wreath of Roses," I

remember, was my best number. In the interval the Director came and told me that two gentlemen wished to speak to me. You will have gathered that love affairs were not on my programme at that period, I regarded all men outside my profession with suspicion ; and my response was :

" I don't want to see them—what do they want of me ? "

However, the Director persuaded me to go and interview these two, who turned out to be Mr. D'Oyley Carte and Mr. Nathaniel Verte, both well-known impressarios.

Mr. Carte, an alert-looking man with a short, black beard, was the spokesman, and he asked me if I would like some concert engagements. I replied rather shortly :

" That is what I am here for."

I am afraid he soon had to accustom himself to my rather outspoken methods, and my disinclination to order myself lowly and reverently towards my betters, but he seemed not to resent it. He was then a leading concert promoter, so that notice from him was distinctly a feather in my cap. He had already

become associated with Gilbert and Sullivan, then just at the beginning of their long artistic partnership ; first at the Royalty Theatre with " Trial by Jury," and afterwards at the Opera Comique with " The Sorcerer." He engaged me to sing at his concerts, and that was the beginning of our long connection.

It was in the year 1878 that I went home to see my parents in Liverpool and enjoy a brief holiday after much hard work. I had established my name in London, I was a rising singer, and my dear father's belief in me and sacrifices for me had been justified. But my ambition was far from being satisfied, I wanted more worlds to conquer. One of my dreams was to see my name walking up and down Regent Street on a sandwich man's back—and this I actually did see, eventually. So never say die, you aspirants for fame !

Well, while I was in Liverpool a telegram came for me one morning. " Would you like comic opera call eleven oclock my office D'Oyley Carte."

It was like a trumpet call ! To go on the stage, to play in a company which was doing

something entirely new and original in light opera! The name of Gilbert and Sullivan was already ringing through the country, I knew well what chances of advancement association with it would give to me. But—it was the Victorian era, the stage was frowned upon by the respectable, and I had been trained in the strict conditions of concert and oratorio singing. Would not such a change in my life mean social downfall, and would not my parents think I had gone to perdition? I dared not tell them of Carte's offer, I knew too well beforehand how strong their objections would be. But in my eyes the prospect was too dazzling, I could not turn away from it. I made some excuse about a pressing engagement in London, packed in hot haste, and caught the first possible train. At eleven o'clock on the appointed morning I was in Mr. D'Oyley Carte's office. He offered me an engagement in his company, and without hesitation I signed a contract for three years, at the princely salary—for me—of three pounds a week.

I was launched at last; my future, if I could please him, was secure.

CHAPTER IV

WELL do I remember my first rehearsal at the grimy little Opera Comique. I was given my part of the score jotted roughly down on scraps of paper, and I sat on the stage in the semi-darkness, singing from sight and unobserved—as I thought. So interested was I, and so absorbed, that I did not become conscious of a chin almost resting on my shoulder until I heard some one say, as though in surprise or relief, "Oh, *that's* all right," and turning round I saw the arbiter of my fate, Arthur Sullivan. He had come up behind me and listened to make sure of my ability to read and sing. Lucky for me that he chose this method; for a trial in public, with a sense of its vital importance in my future, might very well have upset my nerves and made me fail as miserably as in that disastrous examination for the Westmorland Scholarship.

My entrance into that company was a great experience for me, and a wonderful training in more ways than one. At my first contact with the stage to be brought under the influence of three such artists as Gilbert and Sullivan and D'Oyley Carte was invaluable. Their operas were an entirely new manifestation in the world of music and drama. To begin with they were thoroughly English. There had been nothing of the sort since the days of " The Beggar's Opera," and Sullivan's graceful tunes, so English in character, were worthy descendants of the old folk and national songs of Britain. The delicate music was linked to words as delicate, each word, as well as each note, must be given its full value. No striving for individual effect was allowed to interfere with the ensemble, no horse-play was permitted to vulgarize or disturb the action. Nothing must interfere with the balance of the whole, and its presentation according to the perfect principles of art. It is this austerity of interpretation, loyally adhered to still, though its creators can no longer enforce it, which, I venture to think, has kept the Gilbert

and Sullivan operas as fresh and crisp and charming as when they first delighted London.

Our stage discipline was strict and unbending. Gilbert's word was law ; he thoroughly worked out in his own mind every bit of action, by-play and grouping, and allowed no deviation from his plan. He took endless trouble over every detail, and in order that the setting of " H.M.S. Pinafore " should be absolutely correct he and Sullivan went to Portsmouth and visited Nelson's flagship, the " Victory." Gilbert made drawings and took measurements with the minutest care, and the sailors' costumes were made in naval workshops. He had unlimited fertility of invention in comic business, and would allow no gag, no clowning, no departure from his own definite conception.

Sullivan's musical conception was equally clear-cut and decided. Every part must be made subservient to the whole, and his sarcasms overwhelmed the transgressor with scorn. " And now, might I trouble you to try over *my* music," he would say to a singer too anxious to display his or her top notes. But there was

nothing to hurt or offend us in this unswerving discipline, we took their good-humoured raillery as our due when we failed in our rendering or overstepped the bounds ; and the patience and enthusiasm of that artistic pair so infected all of us that we worked willingly for hours and hours at rehearsals, trying with all our might to realize the conceptions of those two brilliant minds.

" H.M.S. Pinafore " was the opera then being rehearsed, and in that I made my first appearance. I played Hebe, a minor character in the opera as it stands now, but which was originally intended for a star part. Mrs. Howard Paul was to fill that rôle ; she was an established favourite with the public, and had made many successful tours with companies of her own. Her connection with Gilbert and Sullivan had begun in " The Sorcerer," in which she played Lady Sangazure. When she engaged herself for that part she stipulated that a young baritone who had been in her own company should also be engaged. This was Rutland Barrington, who, though inexperienced in stage work, made an outstanding

success in the part of Dr. Daly, and was afterwards chosen on his own merits to create the part of Captain Corcoran in "Pinafore."

Gilbert and Sullivan and D'Oyley Carte also wished to include Mrs. Howard Paul in their new opera, and I am sorry to say that I was partly but quite innocently the cause of this gifted actress ending her connection with them. She was not a very great singer, it is true, but she excelled as a performer, and could hold an audience for hours by her clever mimicry and solo sketches. In "Pinafore" as originally planned Hebe was to have had a very good part, giving her scope for interpolation and various "turns" of her own, a latitude which was never afterwards allowed to any member of the company.

Her voice had become unequal to the strain of taking part in the arias and the concerted music of the piece, it was necessary that another member of the company should fill the gap, and for that purpose I was engaged.

Then came the storm. When Mrs. Howard Paul was told that a certain Miss Jessie Bond, an untried new-comer, was to be so nearly

associated with herself, her dignity was up in arms. What—a nonentity to be put in a position of such prominence ! She was so offended that she walked out of the theatre then and there, and refused to take any part in the opera.

That was distinctly a blow for Gilbert and Sullivan, for I was quite without stage experience, and had stipulated from the first that I should have no talking to do, only singing parts. Hebe's share in the dialogue had to be cut out entirely, and with it all the " turns " and impromptus that were to have helped out the play. In this way it came about that " Pinafore " was never the full-length production that its creators had intended, a leading character had to be turned into a subordinate one, and the wonder is that in its shortened form the merry piece has such balance and brightness.

Of course all this was quite unknown to the public, and perhaps my account of the occurrence is the only one on record.

Owing to all these cuts " Pinafore " was too short for a whole evening's entertainment, and there had to be a curtain-raiser. In this first

piece I was cast as understudy for the principal lady, whose part included speaking as well as singing lines. You may remember that I had never yet spoken a word in public, and at that stage in my career I was convinced that I could not and would not. All the same, it was distinctly mentioned in my contract that I was to understudy that part, and I was in a terrible state of mind about it. You cannot imagine with what tender care I watched over the health and safety of my principal! It was my duty to be at the theatre half an hour before the performance began, so as to allow time to dress in any emergency. But to enter the theatre was to put my head into a noose. There was a dirty little public-house in Wych Street, close to the stage-door of the Opera Comique, and I used to slip in there and stand watching for my principal to arrive. If she hadn't come I am sure I should never have had the courage to go to the theatre at all that night, but fortunately I was not put to the test. It is amusing to look back and remember how the mere idea of opening my mouth except to sing terrified me in those days, and I feel

now that it was a pity to have let a temporary feeling of nervousness stand in the way of my advancement.

At the time I speak of Gilbert and Sullivan had not entirely made good, and "H.M.S. Pinafore," although it was by no means a failure, did not at first take the town by storm. To begin with, it was housed in what was then a most unsavoury neighbourhood ; the theatre was small, poor and inconvenient, even according to the standards of those days. Its site was about midway between where the modern buildings of Bush House and Australia House stand now, on the Strand edge of that nest of slums which was afterwards cleared away to make room for the Aldwych and Kingsway. The auditorium was approached by dismal subterranean tunnels ; and the stage and dressing-rooms by a winding staircase that would have been a death-trap in case of fire. There was nothing to attract a public that had not yet learnt the theatre-going habit, and with whom the early-Victorian idea still persisted, that a theatre was not quite the place for decent and respectable people to be seen

in. In addition to all this, a terrible heat-wave was oppressing London that summer, and actors and audience alike perspired and gasped in the stuffy old theatre.

So " H.M.S. Pinafore " was launched under difficulties, and her first contact with the briny was greeted by an only half-hearted cheer. Once she rode the ocean blue, however, her graceful lines and fresh beauty, and the witty words and sparkling melodies put into the mouths of her crew, soon taught London that here was something quite out of the ordinary, eclipsing the old farces and burlesques as the sun eclipses the moon.

Public enlightenment came about in this manner. Arthur Sullivan had just been appointed conductor of the Promenade Concerts, and he took with him our own theatre conductor, Alfred Cellier, so well known afterwards as the composer of that charming opera, " Dorothy." His brother François was our new conductor, who brought us all through those glorious days at the Savoy. Probably by arrangement between the two Celliers, Sullivan was induced to give a selection from

"Pinafore" arranged by Hamilton Clarke, at one of the "Proms."

I was not there, of course—I only wish I had been—but we all heard that its reception was wonderful; it was encored five or six times, and the effect of that success was at once felt in the theatre. Our audiences got bigger and bigger, there was a nightly struggle for seats, and soon every one was whistling and singing the airs. The little shabby Opera Comique had never known such a furore in all its life, throngs besieged its doors, and applause nearly lifted its crazy roof off. "Little Buttercup," "For he is an Englishman," and all the other delightful and catchy melodies from the opera, were heard everywhere. The British Navy was brought into a prominence of affectionate fun and good-humoured banter that delighted every British heart; and the handle of the big front door, the sisters and the cousins and the aunts, and "What, never?" "Well, hardly ever," and all the rest of it, provided ready-made wit for every would-be wag.

That was almost exactly fifty years ago, and is worth recording, because it was then

that Gilbert and Sullivan opera first became really popular. "Trial by Jury" and "The Sorcerer" had just given discerning hearers a hint of what to expect, but they had never of themselves gripped the public.

Now, "H.M.S. Pinafore" was absolutely the rage in London. It was hummed and whistled, sung and quoted everywhere, and you can well imagine what a magical effect all this had on a somewhat depressed and heat-flattened company. For my own part I can assure you that to find myself just at the very beginning of my stage career borne on the tide of such an immense success seemed like a miracle. I was encouraged and strengthened and urged to fresh efforts, and determined to fill rôles bigger and better than Hebe.

Very soon the "Pinafore" craze swept America also, in fact report said that over there enthusiasm was even greater than in England. Copyright laws were lax in those days, and the opera was played, anywhere and anyhow, by companies who had not the remotest right to do it, and seemed quite unconscious of any obligation towards its

composers. Many of the performances were astoundingly bad, a mere travesty of the original; but, however bad they were, the promoters raked in the dollars hand over fist.

Of course Carte was furious, and he went to the United States to see what could be done to preserve his rights. He found that the only way was to send over his own company and have the opera played properly, and then leave the public to judge between true and false. So the next event in my theatrical career was an order to pack up at once and sail for America, together with a company including Rosina Brandram and Alice Barnet. At the same time "Pinafore" was carried on by another company at the Opera Comique.

But I must tell you that before leaving England I was a thrilled spectator of the famous and exciting "battle" which took place in our theatre.

Matters had not gone too smoothly between D'Oyley Carte and his business directors, they behaved in an extraordinary and irritating manner, and often interfered with his manage-

ment. During the run of "The Sorcerer" they had from time to time put up notices announcing that the piece would be taken off in a fortnight, although there was no reason at all for such a course, as it was drawing good houses. One would have expected them to leave "Pinafore" alone, as it was such a huge success and was handsomely paying every one concerned; but no, they began with their pranks again. Whenever receipts fell off—and during that time of tropical heat they sometimes fell off considerably—up went notices that the play was to be closed down. Carte would rush off to soothe the directors, and get them taken down again, but the Company was in a ferment of suspense and anxiety, and Carte's nerves became thoroughly rasped and irritated. At last he would stand it no longer. By this time he was in a strong financial position, and not forced by circumstances to be patient and long-suffering. He was able to buy them out of the business, and the lease of the theatre expiring at this opportune moment he renewed it on his own responsibility.

On the last night of the old regime the angry directors—who, by the way, had only put down five hundred pounds each to start with, so were naturally furious at the prospect of losing their huge profits—came to the stage-door with vans and furniture removers who rushed in and tried to carry away the scenery, which the directors claimed as their own property. The performance was nearly over, Miss Everard, as "Buttercup," was singing at the time, and she pluckily tried to continue her part, in spite of the noise going on behind the scenes, and heard all over the house. There was no panic, though the startled audience suspected fire, and a few people left the theatre. Alfred Cellier had to stop the orchestra, Frank Thornton ran round to a box and spoke to the people, and George Grossmith advanced to the footlights and explained the exact situation. For us young women at the back of the stage it was most unpleasant, as a battle royal was taking place between the burly workmen and the crew of the "Pinafore." However, the jolly Jack Tars expelled the intruders—it was quite a glorious naval victory!

The quarrel was thrashed out in court, and if the spiteful directors had actually wanted to advertise and boom the piece they could not have succeeded better. The newspapers were full of the affair, and public sympathy was all with Carte, who at the time was away in America, fighting his other enemies, the pirates.

CHAPTER V

THE journey to America was my first out of England, and a great adventure it was for a home-grown lassie like me. Our ship was called the "Gallia," and I well remember her and her officers and crew, and the kindness I received from them all. Just at that time I needed kindness. I was not in good health, an abscess in my leg had given me great trouble before leaving England, and during the voyage it was so bad that a sailor had to lift me into my bunk every night.

And here I must tell you of something that happened in the early part of my illness, before we went to America. I had to take a few days' sick leave, and Miss Emily Cross came to see me in my little room in Southampton Row, to find out how I was. She found me in bed nursing the poor foot, and must have gone

back and told a moving story to the Company, for the following letter was the result :

DEAR JESSIE

It was agreed some few nights ago that we should like to take advantage of your present illness to show our sympathy with, and regard for you.

I was asked to work the affair and need scarcely tell you I had great pleasure in doing so.

It was seriously thought of sending you a silver teapot with an inscription, but on the representation of some one (I forget who), that you were very fond of Lollipops, we thought we could not do better than make our little present in the enclosed form.

The following names are those of friends who wish you a speedy recovery and all the good things you can wish yourself.

Yours truly

RUTLAND BARRINGTON.

R. BARKER. G. GROSSMITH. R. TEMPLE.
F. CLIFTON. A. CELLIER.
H. EVERARD. G. POWER. A. BURVILLE.
and ALL THE LADIES

The " Lollipops," enclosed in a pretty little china teapot, were, I need hardly tell you, of the golden variety, and you will see that the

signatures are those of the original " Pinafore " cast. I am sure that all these kind people watched with interest and sympathy my struggle with circumstances, for I was a good deal under the weather just then. The abscess in my ankle was painful and persistent. Surgical science had not then reached its present state of efficiency, and owing to faulty treatment and want of rest my ankle became perfectly stiff, as it is to this day. Of course, I said as little as possible about it, for even partial lameness would spoil my chances on the stage. I doubt if the management ever knew ; the public certainly didn't ; and those who saw me dancing and capering lightheartedly about the stage for twenty years little thought under what difficulties I did it, and the pain I often suffered. When one's future and one's very bread and butter depend on going on as usual, one simply *has* to go on, and that's all there is about it.

In spite of illness and pain I greatly enjoyed that voyage, so interesting just then as giving me practical experience of a life on the ocean wave, which I had only previously known on

the boards of a theatre. It was on board the "Gallia" that I tasted my first cocktail—all those years ago! In fact I tasted two; and they must have been fairly powerful, for they overcame unsophisticated me to such an extent that I had to stay in bed for two days—one for each cocktail!

On one of the young officers of the "Gallia" I seem to have made a deep impression. He never spoke to me during the voyage, but he used to write verses and send them to me; and afterwards when I returned to England he sought me out and proposed marriage. Poor fellow—I have some of those verses still, in which he asserts over and over again,

"I'd gladly die
For darling Jessie Bond.

While drags my weary watch away
My inmost soul doth cry
Oh, love me, darling Jessie Bond,
Oh, love me, or I die."

I have had my share of such tributes, like every popular favourite, and looking back on it all with some amusement, I think how inconvenient it would have been for us actresses

if all the young adorers who declared they would die if we didn't respond to them—had done so !

We landed in America, and at once began our rehearsals. " We have engaged a first-rate chorus, and our Principals are the best who have ever been got together for the immortal ' Pinafore,' " Arthur Sullivan wrote about us to his mother in London. Our Josephine was the beautiful Blanche Rooseveld, a Covent Garden celebrity with an equally beautiful voice ; and, when we opened in the Fifth Avenue Theatre with " H.M.S. Pinafore " as it should be played, we created a sensation. It was then being played in no less than eight theatres in New York alone, and accounts of the garbled versions which had hitherto imposed on America were almost incredible. Every conceivable liberty had been taken with music, words and setting : songs and gag had been interpolated, topical allusions introduced, and one patriotic manager even proposed to transfer the scene to the coast of New Jersey, and change H.M.S. Pinafore to a flagship of the United States Navy !

AS HEBE
IN 'H.M.S. PINAFORE' IN AMERICA

"We have seen the play as a comedy, and we have seen it as a tragedy," one American journal confessed, "but the play these Englishmen have brought over is quite a new play to us, and very good it is." You will observe the rather casual allusion to "these Englishmen"—no mention of their happening to be its creators.

Among other Transatlantic liberties taken with the piece, naturally the dressing had suffered. My own part of Hebe had been played in ballet skirts, as a sort of music-hall dancer. Which reminds me that although Carte was giving me four pounds a week instead of three during this tour, on account of my increased expenses, he refused to give a new dress to Hebe, so I just had to sit down and make one myself, and here is a picture of it. You may think it rather a matronly garment for so young a girl, but it was much admired then. It was composed of crimson velvet trimmed with pink satin, and how careful I was to cut and bind all those scallops correctly! The hat had a long grey feather, and I'm sure I looked quite the future Lady Porter.

Facing this page is a photograph showing my costume in the revival of "Pinafore" some years later.

In New York I stayed in a cheap German boarding-house, I remember, and my room opened into that in which Alice Barnet and her husband slept; an arrangement which I liked, as I felt nervous at night in these strange surroundings. One night I woke with a feeling of oppression and a horrible smell in my nostrils, and the noise I made in trying to open the window roused Alice Barnet.

"What is the matter?" she demanded.

I replied that I smelt a horrid smell of beetles —beetles were my *bête noire*.

But she, once thoroughly awake, was wiser. "It's gas," she said; "don't strike a light, whatever you do."

The gas tap was old and loose, and somehow a chance touch had turned it on. We opened every window and took all precautions, but the effect of that semi-poisoning kept us both in bed for some days.

Talking of beetles—of which I had an unreasoning horror, more than for mice or

spiders or any of the usual feminine aversions —feeling very thirsty one hot day I went into a shop and asked for a drink of lemonade or some such thing, which was given to me all foaming in a glass filled from the bar-siphon. I took a gulp of it, felt some solid, live thing squirming about in my mouth,—and spat out a huge blackbeetle.

"It must have crept up the mouth of the siphon," the bartender explained.

But I examined every morsel of food and drop of liquid I consumed with minute care for long after.

That American tour was very hard work. "Pinafore" had already been played to death in America, and our version, though the genuine one, could not run for ever. Soon we were rehearsing "The Pirates of Penzance," and with both productions we travelled nearly all over the States, seldom playing for two nights in one town. I passed through Buffalo and played there, without ever seeing the famous Falls of Niagara.

The great heat of that summer made all the travelling and hard work doubly trying, and it

so affected me that often I could not act, and had to be carried from the train to the hotel and back again next morning to continue the journey. No wonder the Americans need plenty of iced water to carry them through in such a climate. I remember urgently wanting some in one of the many hotels we stayed at, and ringing my bell over and over again for the waiter. At last he came—a negro he was, of course.

"What a long time you've been!" I exclaimed indignantly. "I've been ringing and ringing until I'm black in the face!"

His astonished and careful study of my features warned me that I had narrowly escaped being embraced as a long-lost sister.

Even so long ago as that, was America coquetting with Prohibition? I don't know; but one thing I am sure of, that whenever during our tours we needed whisky or any such revivers they were put down in our hotel bills as "Laundry."

Yes, that tour was a hard experience, and in addition I had illness to cope with. My leg continually troubled me and, as if that were

not enough, I contracted double pneumonia and nearly died.

Kind Rosina Brandram nursed me, every one did what they could, but I think they nearly despaired of me. When I had passed through what I suppose was the crisis and opened my eyes, some one was putting mustard plasters on my feet, and the whole company, Gilbert and Sullivan included, were standing round the bed with concerned faces.

"What is the matter with you all?" I said. "Why do you look so dismal? I'm going to get better." And I did.

One of Sullivan's many kindnesses to me must here be put on record. While I lay unconscious he had noticed a letter sticking out from beneath my pillow—an unpaid bill it was, which must obviously have given me evil dreams. It was from the doctor in England who had attended me for the abscess in my ankle, an account for between thirty and forty pounds—an impossible sum for me in those days. Sullivan took the bill away with him and sent it back to me afterwards with a cheque enclosed, and a note saying:

"Send this to England to-morrow, Jessie. I am only too glad to help such a good little girl as you are."

Nor was Sullivan alone in his kindness and generosity. Once in England, when I was suffering agonies from toothache, Gilbert sent me to his own dentist, gave orders to have my teeth thoroughly overhauled, and then paid the whole expense. I owe it to him that I keep my own sound teeth to this day!

Both these kind and gifted men were in America with us, and it was there that Sullivan finished his new opera "The Pirates of Penzance." He told me himself that he had written the second act without orchestration before leaving England. Some of the musical themes for the first act were perhaps suggested to him by the events of that voyage, but it is a curious fact that when he wrote the rollicking sailor melodies of "Pinafore," he, like Sir Joseph Porter, had "hardly ever been to sea." He finished "The Pirates" in a New York house now demolished, but the site of it is marked by a tablet. Some little time ago I read an account of the unveiling of that tablet

in the early hours of the morning, by a band of enthusiasts carrying torches.

I don't know whether any connection of ideas inspired Gilbert with his theme for the libretto of "The Pirates," but certainly there was poetic justice in an opera of that name being first produced and partly written in the country which had so shamelessly pirated "Pinafore." No doubt the cute Yankees perceived and chuckled at the aptness of the name; but that did not make them any better pleased to have a highly-paying game stopped, and both Gilbert and Sullivan were on occasion made to feel their unpopularity. Not that that troubled them, but the piracy did.

"I will not have another of my librettos produced if the Americans are going to steal it," Gilbert angrily declared before leaving England. "Not that I need the money so much, but it spoils my digestion."

When we began to rehearse and play "The Pirates" the most careful watch was kept over both score and libretto; which, the better to ensure safety, were not allowed to be printed, and everything was locked up when not in

use. Even so, expert musicians were paid to attend the performances and make notes of the score. However, such underhand methods could only produce snatches and garbled fragments, and the new opera was produced with immense success.

"A success unparalleled in New York," as Sullivan wrote to his mother. "At last I really think I shall get a little money out of America. I ought to, for they have made a good deal out of me." In another letter he said: "In order to strike while the iron is hot, and get all the profit we can while every one is talking about it, we are sending out three companies to other towns in America, and all these have to be selected, organized, and rehearsed." This meant enormous work for all the promoters, and was especially hard on Sullivan, who suffered from a painful internal complaint; and yet the blithe music of "Pinafore," and later on that of "The Pirates," was written in the intervals of acute and agonizing pain.

We all worked hard enough, but the magnificent success was our reward. "Fortunately,"

Sullivan says in another of his letters, "our Company and all the Chorus are charming people and devoted to us, and spare themselves no pains or trouble to do their work thoroughly well." Again he says, speaking of the triumphant first night: "The *mise en scène* and the dresses are something to be dreamed about. I never saw such a beautiful combination of colour and form on any stage. All the girls dressed in the old-fashioned English style, every dress designed separately by Faustin, and some of the girls look as if they had stepped out of a Gainsborough picture. The New York ladies are raving about them."

My own part in the new play was that of Edith, one of the many charming daughters of Major-General Stanley. By this time I had gained experience and confidence. I was no longer afraid to undertake a speaking as well as a singing part, and was eager to fill a more prominent position in the Company. The part of Edith, though better than that of Hebe, did not satisfy my growing ambition; and, as I had now made myself of some consequence to the management, I felt able to

tackle Gilbert on the subject and ask that the part might be improved. I quote his letter to me on the subject, not only as showing his difficulties in making any alteration, but also to show how well and kindly disposed he was towards me personally, and how friendly were our relations, in spite of the few brushes almost inevitable during our long and close association of twenty years :

My dear Jessie

I have carefully considered how to improve the part of Edith (quite as much in our interests as in your own), and I don't see how the dialogue can be materially altered in such a way as to do you any real good.

Padding out a few sentences that follow the entrance of the girls would be of no use to you —the situation scarcely admits amplification, does it ? Of course I could add a couple of pages of dialogue about papa and the mermaids, and so forth, but it would be obvious padding and nothing else.

My difficulty is increased by Sullivan being abroad, for he might have consented to a song to precede Frederic's entrance from the cave —and I would gladly have written such a song —but he is at Monaco and quite unlikely to work. Indeed, I will write such a song with

pleasure if you think my doing so will satisfy you, and if you will take your chance of Sullivan setting it. I suppose you could sing both the verses "Let us gaily tread," and "Far away from toil and strife." I should be delighted if you would.

I am writing such a particularly good part for you in the new piece that I should be distressed beyond measure if you should leave us. I've never said as much as this to any actor or actress before. I don't say it to induce you to play so insignificant a part as Edith, for if you left us now, and came back to us to play that part, I should be satisfied. But if you didn't play it, my calculations would be all upset, and I should lose a dear little lady for whom I have always had a very special regard.

Always affectionately yours
W. S. Gilbert

Perhaps this letter also indicates that I was not without inducement to leave the Gilbert and Sullivan combination and join some other company. Indeed, I had many such offers during my connection with them, but in spite of all temptations—and sometimes they were pretty strong—I could never find it in my heart to leave an atmosphere of such mirth,

artistry and pleasantness ; and continued to be a happy and deeply-interested member of that jolly crew until I left the stage altogether.

In connection with the plots of his early operas it is a rather illuminating fact that Gilbert's father was a naval surgeon, so that ideas about the sea and sailors must soon have occupied his infant mind, and borne fruit later in the Bab Ballads and the librettos of "Pinafore" and "The Pirates." Indeed, pirates and perfectly genuine ones were associated with an adventure of his early childhood, as well as with the American annoyances of his manhood.

When he was only two years old his parents were travelling in Europe, making the Grand Tour of those days. While in Naples he was out walking with his nurse one day, when two men accosted her and said that the English gentleman had sent them for the baby. She surrendered the pretty child—Gilbert was remarkable for his infant beauty—perhaps believing the tale, but more likely she had no choice in the matter. The little boy was taken up into the mountains by his captors, he dis-

tinctly remembered riding on a horse in front of a man up a steep path cut in the hill ; and years afterwards he recognized the Via Posilipo as the road which he had never forgotten. The distracted parents sent carabinieri to search for him ; the brigands were tracked ; and for a ransom of twenty-five pounds English money they gave up their little prisoner, none the worse for his adventure. In fact, he was probably much the better in the long run, when that extremely well-invested twenty-five pounds brought him in a golden harvest of plots concerning brigands, pirates, babies changed at nurse, and all the rest of it.

" The Pirates of Penzance, or The Slave of Duty," was produced in New York on the 31st December, 1879, and at the same time as nearly as difference in longitude permitted, one of the British companies touring the West of England with " Pinafore " gave it at a semi-private performance in a small theatre in Paignton, before an audience of about fifty people. That had to be done to preserve the copyright on both sides of the Atlantic. Not until three months later was the opera publicly

produced at the Opera Comique in London, when the huge success of New York was repeated, and the play ran for four hundred nights to crowded houses.

While on the subject of "The Pirates," I must not forget to mention another brush Gilbert and Sullivan had with an American public jealous of their success; and, foiled in piratical schemes, trying to baulk them in another way.

The orchestra of American musicians engaged to play in the new production argued that it was a Grand Opera, and therefore, according to trade union rules, they were entitled to higher rates of pay. It had been so impressed upon them by the manager that they were honoured in being chosen to play under the baton of England's most famous composer that they felt the occasion demanded a rise in salaries, as well as in status.

Arthur Sullivan tackled the situation with his usual readiness and resource. Addressing the men, he modestly disclaimed the distinction they wished to give him, and said that on the contrary he was honoured in being

able to conduct so brilliant a body of musicians. And—therein lay the sting—if they felt the position in any way beneath their dignity, rather than they should be imposed upon, he would cable immediately to England for his own orchestra, which had been specially trained for the forthcoming Leeds Festival.

The hint was promptly taken, and the Americans decided not to charge Sullivan extra for the privilege of being conducted by him. It was the last difficulty of any importance ; and even that bore good fruit by the discussion it provoked and the resulting free advertisement in the newspapers.

CHAPTER VI

AFTER eight months in America we returned to England, and I took my old place in the Opera Comique as Edith in "The Pirates of Penzance."

To that period belongs the following amusing note from W. F. Best, the famous organist, whose acquaintance I had made in my oratorio-singing days in the North :

DEAR PIRATE OF FALKNER STREET

I had to stay a day longer in Liverpool on account of General Roberts' visit to St. George's Hall this morning, and had your card on my arrival here this evening. Now, if you are inclined to ring up Miriam in time, to-morrow morning (Wednesday), I will call and take you to a "wedding" at the City Temple, at which I play on the pealing organ : we might get in for something nice : I'll call for you at 10.30, and not a moment later, when you will both be beautifully washed and dressed and not regret it.

The chapel holds three thousand people, and you need not have white lace veils—in any case, we will have several hundred native oysters after the man and woman are cemented together.

Wake up Miriam, and call yourself in good time : 10.30 to the moment.

Yours truly
W. F. Best

To Jessie of Dumblane.

"The Pirates" ran for four hundred nights, but long before its popularity began to wane Gilbert and Sullivan were preparing to follow it up by another opera, this time based on the æsthetic craze of the day. Already Du Maurier and Burnand had been poking fun at the "greenery-yallery" school in "Punch," and Burnand wrote a play called "The Colonel," which was produced in the old Prince of Wales Theatre in Tottenham Court Road.

Gilbert had written the libretto of "Patience" before then ; but "The Pirates" were still on the crest of the wave, and Sullivan, ill and tired after composing "The Martyr of Antioch," was travelling on the Continent. So the work was behindhand ; and parts of the

opera were actually being rehearsed before the whole was finished, while Sullivan did not begin the orchestral scoring until ten days before the opening night.

A hectic time it was for all concerned ! But, although everybody said it couldn't possibly be ready, it was : and on the night of April 23rd, 1881, the curtain rose on another brilliant success, which ran even longer than " The Pirates."

The " particularly good part " which Gilbert had promised me in his letter quoted a few pages back was never a part I liked. Love-sick sentimentality had never been in my line, so Angela's posturing and languishing and casting up of eyes was a bore to me, and I hated it. You see, *I* knew nothing about the crazes of leisured London. I was a hard-working actress, my time completely taken up with studying, rehearsing, and acting, and any intervals more than filled with the care of my modest little apartment, my clothes and private concerns. I never even saw the play (or any other that I acted in) from start to finish, so to me it was all rather silly and meaningless.

An outsider would hardly credit the strict discipline of our life behind the scenes. No lingering about was allowed, no gossiping with the other actors ; the women's dressing-rooms were on one side of the stage, the men's on the other, and when we were not actually playing we had to mount at once our respective narrow staircases—sheep rigorously separated from the goats !

Once, when my mother came to see me in London, expecting to find me dwelling in haunts of gilded luxury, and far down the road to perdition, I took her behind the scenes and showed her the arrangements for the actors and actresses, conventual in their austerity. She was astonished, I can assure you, and evidently thought it all very dull and restricted.

I think there never was a theatre run on lines of such strict propriety ; no breath of scandal ever touched it in all the twenty years of my experience. Gilbert would suffer no loose word or gesture either behind the stage or on it, and watched over us young women like a dragon. Not that I ever gave him any trouble. Verses and love-letters used to be sent to me,

presents and invitations too, all of which I returned or disregarded. The unhappy experiences of my youth had made me quite impervious to that sort of thing. I had no use for love or lovers, and never felt the slightest romantic interest in any man I acted with. I lived only for my work, my last meal was a light one at six o'clock, and never once in all those years did I accept an invitation to supper!

That reminds me of one invitation I received during the run of "Patience." Gilbert happened to be behind the scenes one night when a note was brought to me.

"What's that, Jessie—a love-letter?" he said.

"Here it is, you can look for yourself," I replied indifferently, handing it to him.

It was from a party of four young men in one of the stage boxes, inviting me to supper with them after the performance. Gilbert was furious. He went round to the box, rated the young men for insulting a lady in his Company, and insisted on their leaving the house forthwith. Rather drastic treatment, I think now; and of course it got into the papers, the comic

papers particularly. They made very merry over our boarding-school discipline, and pitied me for my nun-like existence. "Poor little dear, she always has to show her love-letters to her daddy!"

Even Gilbert, dragon though he was, could not have objected to a letter in verse which appeared under my portrait in a newspaper as one of a series of "Notes to Theatrical Ladies."

To correspond
With Jessie Bond
Is now my fixed intention.
(Which fact I ween,
You must have seen
Before I gave it mention.)
My dear Miss B.,
You'll pardon me,
A fatherly First-Nighter,
For acting thus
The amorous
And uninvited writer?
I apprehend
(You may depend!)
You'd really much rather
Have notes from such
As are not much
Too old to be your father.
I guess, of course,
Ten times the force

Might go with what I'm writing,
If he who wrote
This little note
Were not so uninviting.
And so I say,
Forgive, I pray,
Your fatherly First-Nighter,
For acting thus
The amorous
And uninvited writer!
Oh, Jessie Bond!
What mem'ries fond
Persistently pursue me—
What creepy thrills,
Like winter chills,
Run up and down and through me—
Whene'er I chance
A backward glance,
At times when, off my filbert
With you (my "mash!"),
I blew my cash
On Sullivan and Gilbert!
I loved you then
With all my pen
(My heart's amanuensis),
And folks who read
Sat up and said
"His love for her immense is!"
Nor were they wrong;
Your merry song—
You sing divinely, sweetly!—
Your lively dance
And roguish glance
Had captured me completely!

I don't complain !
I'd still remain
A pris'ner now and ever !
From such a Bond
'Tis far beyond
My humble wish to sever !
Now, pray don't scold,
I know I'm bold,
But, still, I'm not a sinner. For,
Remember this,
I've known you, miss,
Since you were in a *Pinafore* !

These verses show that I was beginning to be noticed by theatre-goers, in spite of my still small and unimportant parts, and now in my third opera I felt quite an old hand at the game. The ease of long habit did not save me from occasional slips and disasters, however, and one night when, in "Patience," we love-sick maidens were lying on our tummies—and very uncomfortable it was—adoring Rutland Barrington as he sang his Silver Churn song, I suddenly spied a black-beetle close to my arm.

Haven't I told you that a black-beetle is worse to me than a wild beast ? I felt I would die if it touched me. There was a piece of

fluff lying on the floor ; I picked it up, and tried to head the beetle off with that. No good, opposition roused its fighting spirit, it came straight for me. That was too much. Without hesitation I sprang up, gathered my scanty draperies round me, and ran away. The other girls, astonished at my unrehearsed action, jumped up too. They saw no beetles, and probably wouldn't have cared if they had ; but what I did they did too, as a matter of course and stage discipline. So we all scuttled off the stage, leaving Rutland Barrington gaping at us with his mouth wide open. He uttered a reproachful " Oh, Jessie ! " then pulled himself together and finished his song to an empty stage.

That escapade cost me half a crown. We were always fined for our mistakes or slips, but I think myself that that one was cheap at the price.

Another of my half-crowns, I remember, went to atone for my lapse—also in " Patience " —when as Angela I had to say " Retribution, like a poisèd hawk, came swooping down upon the Wrong-Doer." This I rendered as " hoisèd

pork," and retribution swept down on me accordingly.

There was still another occasion on which I was fined, when playing in an afterpiece with Rutland Barrington and Richard Temple. It was an operetta by Alfred Cellier called " After All," and I took the part of a maidservant who had to rush in and say, " Oh, sir, the missis is having *such* a row with the cabman ! " and one night, when I was standing in the wings talking to George Grossmith, my cue came rather unexpectedly. He said, " Go on, Jessie," and gave me a vigorous push. I stumbled on to the stage, cap-strings flying, hands outspread, eyes and mouth wide open, in a most realistic state of agitation, and gasped out, " Oh, sir, the missis is having such a *cow* with the *rab-man* ! " The house simply roared at me. Rutland Barrington, convulsed with laughter, put his head down on the table and all but wept, and Dick Temple, helpless and shaking, hid his face in the window curtains—and there I stood like a gaby in the middle of the stage. They couldn't recover themselves, the curtain had to come down, and I drifted off dis-

consolately to find George Grossmith, cause of all the trouble, nearly dying of laughter in the wings. But D'Oyley Carte, our stern Mentor, only said callously :

" Half a crown, please, Miss Bond ! "

Sometime during the run of " Patience " I met Oscar Wilde, the high-priest of æstheticism and prototype of Bunthorne. It was at a party in some great house ; and I was taken up and introduced to him as he stood before the fire-place with an air of owning everything. He deigned to stoop and shake hands with me ; and I did not like the feel of his hand, nor did I like him, though I knew no harm of him then.

Another poet, but of less eminence, sent me the following amusing verses about this time, entitled

(Out of) Patience.

Sweet Jessie Bond
Must I despond
Nor strive your heart to win,
But turn aside
And seek as bride
Delightful Julia Gwynne ?
If that won't do
Miss Fortescue

May soothe my bosom's pain,
Or in despair,
And crushed by care,
I'll turn to Lady Jane.
Unless some lucky swell steps in
And cuts me out again.

It was in October, 1881, when "Patience" had already been running for over six months before audiences that packed every corner of the little old musty Opera Comique, that we moved into our new quarters in the Savoy Theatre. Carte was an astute and enterprising manager, he foresaw years of success for the Gilbert and Sullivan combination, and his theatre was built for the future as well as for the present. All the arrangements were as perfect as he could make them both before and behind the scenes. The decorations were tasteful and harmonious; the refreshment department was managed by a salaried official of the Firm, and everything was of the best quality; programmes and cloakroom accommodation were given free. What a change from all the petty exactions and farming annoyances of the old regime!

But, above all, the lighting arrangements

were entirely revolutionized. The old, hot, yellow, evil-smelling and air-exhausting gas-lamps were discarded for ever, and the new light, electricity, took their place. The brilliant row of arc lamps at the entrance were a wonder to London, and the stage-lighting gave natural colour-value to dresses and scenery. The die-hards predicted darkness and disaster, and indeed the new system did not work quite smoothly at first. The alternative gas-lighting had occasionally to be used, but very soon all was in thorough working order. Another scientific marvel was the provision of hand grenades for extinguishing fires, which had recently been tested with great success.

Without a break in the performances "Patience" was transferred to her new home, and opened on that memorable and brilliant night of October 10th with new dresses, new scenery, and renewed life and sparkle. "Everybody" was there; and the splendour of the new theatre and its appointments was the talk of the town.

That was forty-eight years ago, and the Savoy, then a supreme achievement of theatri-

Photo Elliott & Fry.

AS LADY ANGELA
IN 'PATIENCE'

cal architecture, became by long wear and tear shabby, out of date and unpractical. A new and beautiful theatre, as far above the old in its appointments as the Savoy was above the Opera Comique, has risen on its ruins, and as I write another brilliant opening is arranged, another Gilbert and Sullivan Era is commencing. And I am sure that the time is far, far distant when an ever-changing and developing civilization will cease to delight in and to revive these melodious echoes of the past.

But to return to my story. You may be sure that when the old Savoy was the new Savoy we actresses were glad to have larger and more convenient dressing-rooms, and a green-room where we could sit in comfort. We used to bring our sewing and other little domestic occupations there and work at them in spare moments, for we were all of us more or less struggling to make both ends meet on small salaries.

One evening four or five of us were sitting there, sewing and chatting together—I was turning a sheet, I remember—when the door

opened and Carte came in, followed by several other gentlemen. At a glance we recognized one of them for the Prince of Wales, and stood up. Carte did not introduce us, and nobody took the least notice of us; in fact the Prince sat down in a chair, and straddling one leg over the arm of it he took a big cigar from his case and proceeded to light it. No "May I, ladies?" or "By your leave," you observe. This behaviour annoyed me very much, I looked at my future Sovereign none too meekly, and sat down again.

Carte, who was standing behind the Prince, did not approve of this at all, he grimaced and frowned and shook his head at me, and made frantic signs that I should stand up.

"What do you mean, you little devil? Stand up at once, can't you?" I could feel him saying it as well as if he had spoken.

The Prince evidently felt thunder in the air, for presently he came and sat down beside me, still taking no notice of the other ladies.

"What are you doing, Miss Bond?" he asked.

"I'm turning a sheet sides to middle, sir,"

I replied ; and am very sure that he had never before heard of such an operation.

" Can't I help you ? "

" I'm afraid you'd do more harm than good, sir," was my uncourtier-like response.

He laughed, and in a few minutes he left the green-room.

Carte tried to take me to task for my behaviour, but I would not submit to that.

" You did not present us," I said, " and in any case you only pay me to act on the stage, my behaviour off it is not your business."

But there was no resentment in the Royal mind, for almost directly afterwards I was invited by Sir Arthur Sullivan to meet the Prince. The episode of the green-room was mentioned, and I told him of Carte's attempted scolding.

" You know, sir," I said, " there *are* ladies in our profession, and you might give some of us the benefit of the doubt."

" Miss Bond," he replied, " you are perfectly right."

From that time he was to me a most kind and thoughtful friend, causing me to receive

many invitations and singing engagements, which not only meant flattering recognition, but most useful and acceptable golden rewards. But I am not, and never was, awed by royalty or rank in itself, and had no hesitation in repelling undue advances.

"May I come to see you, Miss Bond?" he asked me on one occasion.

"What for, sir?" I asked. "My mother would be very surprised if she saw *you* walking into our house."

I had no mother and no house—in London—but that did not matter, and my answer had the desired effect.

CHAPTER VII

"IOLANTHE, or The Peer and the Peri," was produced at the Savoy on the night of November 25th, 1882, and five hours later, owing to the difference in time, the first performance opened in New York.

That five hours difference just allowed for a cable to be sent describing the enthusiastic reception of the opera in London, and it was read to the assembled audience in New York before the curtain rose, adding to the excitement and high anticipations which were fully justified by the performance.

The Company which played it had been trained in England and sent over completely equipped to give simultaneous performances, thus preserving the copyright. Gilbert and Sullivan were taking no more chances, they had learnt their lesson. Every effort was made to keep the name, plot and music of the new

piece secret. The scores were carefully locked up after each rehearsal ; but even so a good deal of information got into the papers.

As for the name, it was changed only one day before the first performance, from " Perola " to " Iolanthe "—rather to the confusion of the actors. Gilbert and Sullivan had wished to continue their series of lucky P's—Pinafore, Patience, Pirates of Penzance—but the word " Perola " did not sing well, and " Iolanthe " it became, a far more musical and attractive title. Even then, " The Peer and the Peri " added to it brought in the lucky letter.

It was like a dream come true when I saw my own name in the title-rôle ; I, Jessie Bond, who had begun so modestly and ploughed through so many difficulties ; and my success was sweetened by so much kindness and such golden opinions from those with whom I worked, as well as from a public always for me most affectionate and appreciative, that it was doubly welcome.

My part in " Iolanthe " was written expressly for me. Gilbert was always considerate

Photo Elliott & Fry.

AS IOLANTHE
IN 'IOLANTHE'

and thoughtful, and wished me to have one with not too much physical exertion, so as to spare my still weak ankle. He called to see me one afternoon, and told me about the new opera he was writing with a special part for me.

"You will not have to dance, and hardly to move," he said, "and as you are always laughing, I have written a song to show that you can be serious when you like." That song, "He loves," proved to be one of the successes of the opera.

Gilbert always had his eye on me as an actress, as distinguished from a singer, and was convinced that I had it in me to shine in bigger and more ambitious parts. He tried to give me a chance to do so, as I shall show later on, and I had many offers from well-known managers to leave the Savoy and throw in my lot with them; offers which for various reasons I did not accept.

Again, in "Iolanthe," Gilbert and Sullivan held up before the amused British Public, which loves to laugh at itself, a mirror in which its own ideas, foibles, and social conventions

were most whimsically caricatured. The digs at Members of Parliament, party politics, and the House of Lords, were received with shrieks of delight, yet there was nothing so personal as to fit the case or hurt the feelings of any individual legislator, hereditary or elected. One personal allusion indeed there was, but the harmless fun of it made it one of the biggest hits of that memorable evening.

It was just a happy chance that set Captain Shaw, one of the best known and most popular men in London and Chief of the Metropolitan Fire Brigade, right in the centre of the stalls on that night of all others ; and to this astonished man the Fairy Queen, advancing with outstretched arms, made her impassioned appeal :

> Oh, Captain Shaw,
> Type of true love kept under !
> Could thy Brigade
> With cold cascade
> Quench my great love, I wonder !

The improved stage fittings and increased space of the Savoy Theatre made it possible to present " Iolanthe " much more effectively

and elaborately than any of the previous operas. There was a great sensation when the fairies tripped in with electric stars shining in their hair—nothing of the sort had ever been seen before—and the splendid robes of the Peers, correct in every detail, deeply impressed the public on both sides of the Atlantic, and caused British Peerage stock to rise by leaps and bounds in the American Marriage Market.

The Palace Yard scene was another huge success, for there is nothing people like better than to see familiar things idealized and worked into a story.

Still another scenic triumph was the river from which Iolanthe emerges in the first act. It was a shallow trough of real water, and I was always afraid of slipping into it when I rose through the trap-door on my little platform, and crossed it on the lily-leaves which were my stepping-stones. I did in fact slip in once, when some idiot had re-painted the lily-leaves just before the performance, so I had to wade through the water and climb out feeling very cross, and with most realistic wet feet.

Realism can be carried too far, as it was when one night a zealous property man said to me :

" It'll be just like the real thing to-night, Miss Bond. I've put some frogs into the water ! "

" Then you'll just have to fish them out again," I retorted, " and the curtain won't go up until you do."

They had to catch those frogs in an inverted umbrella. Everybody got splashed and agitated, and the performance was delayed for some time.

Another very serious hitch in the proceedings occurred one night when the machinery of the little platform on which I stood to be wound up to stage level refused to work. There was I stuck half-way, they could not get me either up or down ! Things like that are funny enough to look back on, but what overwhelming disasters they are at the moment !

My " Iolanthe " contract was for six pounds a week, a rise of one third in my fortunes, and from that time my salaries rose steadily, if not so fast as I myself thought proper. Some such difference of opinion seems to be referred

to in the following note from Gilbert, and I may remark in passing that his idea of what it was right for me to have and my own did not always coincide, for when just about this time I made one of my periodical demands for a rise, I didn't get it.

19 HARRINGTON GARDENS
SOUTH KENSINGTON
19 *Jan.* 84

MY DEAR JESSIE

The moral of the whole thing is, come to me when you want anything, and if it's right that you should have it, you *shall* have it.

You have played Melissa admirably.

Yours always
W. S. GILBERT

Gilbert here refers to my part in "Princess Ida," which succeeded "Iolanthe" on January 5th, 1884, and opened as brilliantly as all the others, though it failed to grip the public as they had done. The setting was magnificent, and the lovely music indicates what Gilbert and Sullivan might have done together if they had attempted grand opera. But in the libretto of "Princess Ida" Gilbert did not make his usual hit, there is something

very laboured about it, and the jokes were too recondite and the language too Tennysonian (or as the gallery thought "too full of quotations from Shakespeare"), to please the popular taste. The subject also was less widely interesting than that of the other operas, or it may have been rather too domestically poignant in those early suffragette days, when not only the nation at large but private households and families were bitterly divided on the question, and the latent antagonisms of sex showed themselves in ugly forms. Perhaps Gilbert did not treat the subject lightly enough; to him, no doubt, as to every one else, it lay a little too deep for jesting. At any rate, I could never feel that he had enjoyed creating it, and am sure that he turned with a sigh of relief to the delightful fooling of "Mikado," which was our next and immensely popular production. "Princess Ida" ran for ten months only, and was followed by revivals of "The Sorcerer" and "Trial by Jury," until on March 14th, 1885, the curtain rose on the enchanting Town of Titipu.

Photo Elliott & Fry.

AS MELISSA
IN 'PRINCESS IDA

CHAPTER VIII

SEVEN years had now gone by since that eventful day when D'Oyley Carte's telegram had cut short my holiday in Liverpool, and opened for me a new way of life. Seven years of hard work and ceaseless effort ; and I think I may add, of attainment. I had won for myself a secure place in the affections of the public, my relations with the management and with my fellow-actors were intimate and happy.

My salary was rising : it was still modest according to the standards of to-day, but I began at last to taste the pleasures that money brings. No longer need I cook and wash and make and mend ; I moved into a commodious flat in Chancery Lane, and had a maid to wait on me and keep the home fires burning.

She didn't always do that, as I discovered one night when I was taken ill in the theatre, and had to go home early. The flat was

empty, there was no one to receive and wait on me, and I found that my maid was herself a performer, she sang and danced on the stage of the Holborn Music Hall, but generally managed to get home before I did. What is more, I found that she had made a practice of wearing my silk stockings to dance in.

However, these little accidents will happen, and on the whole my menage ran smoothly, though one night I nearly lost my little home and all my possessions. An excited messenger arrived at the theatre—the house I lived in was on fire! The piece—it was "The Gondoliers" I think—was only half over, and I of course was in stage costume; but forgetting all other considerations, I rushed away just as I was to protect my own property or witness its destruction. Fortunately things were not as bad as that, the fire was extinguished—thanks to Captain Shaw—and my rooms suffered very little damage. How the play got on without me I dare not think; and of course Carte was furious, and made it a rule that never again were letters or messages to be brought to me or to any other actor during the performance.

As my professional status improved I made friends in high places and had many social engagements. I have told you of my first meeting with the Prince of Wales, and it was the first of many. His Royal Highness was genuinely interested in the theatre ; and often came behind the scenes to see us all, and express the pleasure our performances gave him. Once he brought with him the Duke of Clarence and Prince George, our present King ; two nice boys, a little shy ; but evidently much interested in all they saw and heard.

To me the Prince of Wales was always particularly kind and friendly ; I think my lively tongue and natural, unrestrained ways, which however I knew well how to keep within the necessary bounds, amused and pleased him. Certainly he treated me with great kindness, and it was to him I owed many an engagement to sing privately in the most exalted company.

He and the Duke of Edinburgh used to go a great deal to Sir Arthur Sullivan's ; they were all very fond of music, but also of poker, and used to play, I fancy, for pretty high

stakes. I don't play poker myself, but the Prince liked me to chat with him in the intervals of the game, and he always declared that I brought him luck.

"Come and be our Mascot, Jessie," Sullivan would say; and I used to sit there and watch them until the morning hours were well advanced. Often I sang; and one of Sullivan's letters refers to an occasion I well remember.

1 QUEEN'S MANSIONS
VICTORIA ST. S.W.

DEAR JESSIE

The Prince of Wales is coming here on Sunday night. Please come and help me entertain him. I think if you do the duet from Ruddigore with Barrington it would be very funny. I have seen Barrington this morning and he agrees with me. Come, like a dear child, and settle with him to-night about getting the dress from the wardrobe. Please don't say a word to anyone at the theatre.

Yours affectionately
ARTHUR SULLIVAN

P.S. You can dress and undress in my bedroom.

I must explain why Sullivan counselled

secrecy. Not because he thought other members of the Company might be jealous—oh, dear no—but because the party was to be on Sunday! Mid-Victorian days, you understand; strict conventions; and the Heir-Apparent's Sabbath-breaking had to be kept dark. It seems rather funny now, but then it was a serious matter. In these circumstances the duet "I once was a very abandoned person," sung by Barrington and me and accompanied by Sir Arthur Sullivan, had distinctly the right flavour, and Sullivan himself had grievously fallen from grace since the days, when as a young student returning from Leipsic, he was able to assure Sir George Smart that he had never attended a concert on Sunday!

I remember once sitting beside the Prince at some reception, and when I was not looking he tied some of the ribbons that decorated my dress to the chair-rail. Of course when I tried to rise, I couldn't; and he laughed as I fumbled with the knots.

"Why have you tied me up like this, sir?" I demanded.

" Because it's quite time you were tied up to somebody," was the reply.

A good many people have thought that at different times in my career, and have tried hard to make me think likewise. But once bitten, twice shy; I clung to my freedom. Nevertheless, it was during the run of " The Mikado " that I met the man who, though not until many years later, induced me to change my mind.

It was at the Health Exhibition in Olympia, at a tea-party that some one gave in a kind of roof-garden over one of the exhibits. Mr. Lewis Ransome was there, and we were introduced. He had just returned from America, and as I also knew America, that was our first point of contact. He was a pleasant, handsome man, who had travelled much and could talk well.

" My sister and I were at ' Mikado ' the other night," he told me, " and when we were talking it over afterwards I said I liked the little one with the big sash best. So next day when she saw a photograph of you in a shop window she went in and bought it. She gave it to me and I have it now."

That was me with my big obi. I was always trying by hook or by crook to get myself noticed. In so many of my parts I was only one of a group; and I was sick of having girls hanging round my waist and crowding up to me. "Iolanthe" had been a delightful exception, and I wanted more of the limelight.

There was nothing much to single me out from the Three Little Maids from School, so I persuaded the wardrobe mistress to give me a big obi, twice as big as any of the others. She did—I wonder she dared, or that the eagle eyes of the Triumvirate passed it—and I made the most of my big, big bow, turning my back to the audience whenever I got a chance, and waggling it. The gallery was delighted, but *I* nearly got the sack for that prank! However, I did get noticed, which was what I wanted. Gilbert himself says

> You must stir it and stump it
> And blow your own trumpet
> Or, believe me, you haven't a chance.

At any rate Mr. Ransome's attention was attracted, and my long friendship with him afterwards changed the whole course of my life.

Another little incident of that time occurs to me, concerning a man still well known in London society, but whose name must obviously not be mentioned.

One evening—a Saturday evening it was—a packet was brought to me which contained a magnificent diamond bracelet. With it was a note : would I meet the sender next day at the Burlington Hotel in Burlington Gardens, have lunch with him there and talk over some business ? If I wore the bracelet that night on the stage he would expect me.

That of course I did not do ; and as soon as possible—Sunday intervening—I took it to the jeweller whose name was on the case, asking him to return it to the buyer, and the receipt for it I have still. It was valued at five hundred pounds. Shortly afterwards the man who sent it to me went bankrupt—and a nice exposure it would have been for me if my name had been brought up in the bankruptcy proceedings ! I heard afterwards that he had made a bet that he would break through my rule of never accepting presents or invitations from strangers ; but he lost that,

though he was not called upon to pay for the bracelet!

We all enjoyed acting in "Mikado," and, as it ran so long that we knew our parts upside down and inside out, we used to divert ourselves by little private jokes and antics, unobserved by the audience.

Grossmith and Barrington loved to tease me, and often wrought me up to such a pitch of desperation that I threatened to complain to Carte—but never did! They would slap and pinch me in the scene where the Mikado condemns us all to death, until I wriggled about in a state of torment which pleased the house immensely, though Temple (the Mikado) declared that it was not art. No doubt he was right, but it was certainly human nature. Temple could speak with authority, he was a very finished actor. I remember Gilbert, who was never lavish with praise, saying of him, "He is an artist, that fellow."

Another of their tricks was to put hot pennies down my back under my loose kimono, which I would shake down and out with all possible celerity, needless to say. That trick must

have cost them a good deal of foresight and careful preparation ! Talking of pennies, Barrington amused himself one day by borrowing four shillings from me to pay the cabman—though I was certain he had it in his pocket —and insisting on paying me back in small sums while we were on the stage, and in such a way that I could not avoid taking it. For weeks he kept me in a state of exasperation by giving me halfpennies, farthings, halfpenny or penny stamps, all together or separately, and insisting on a record being kept in chalk on the green-room door. I'm sure I was cheated out of most of that four shillings, though he declared he had paid it over and over again. Ah, well, those were jolly times !

By then I was earning fifteen pounds a week, not counting my fees for the private singing engagements, which, as I said before, were offered to me pretty frequently. It was a very pleasant time in my life. I was financially at ease, and success was still a novelty and sweet on the tongue.

The Prince of Wales continued his kind interest in my career, and many times I met

him and was distinguished by his special notice. On one occasion at Sir Arthur Sullivan's there was a very brilliant party, and at supper a table was reserved for the royal guests. I was sitting down with the more ordinary people when the Prince saw me and sent for me to sit by him at his own table, a great honour for a young and comparatively unknown girl, as I was then. The only other guests at that table were the Duke of Edinburgh and the Grand Duchess of Schleswig-Holstein—very exalted companions for little Jessie Bond!

The Prince nearly always wanted me to sing at such functions, and usually he chose an extract from one of the operas, but though he knew them so well he was sometimes a little at sea about details, as once when he asked me for a number that was really a duet. I protested that I couldn't sing it alone; at which he suggested that he might join me, an offer that I refused without ceremony.

If I were writing about some one else I could better give an account of the next few years; much less eventful outwardly, but in which my

inner life matured and developed. Safe from want, and sure of success, I could pause mentally and look back over the past, could reckon up my gains and losses, and find out where I stood.

Let me say now, though I have not hinted at it before, that it was not entirely with a light and willing heart that I went on the stage. Mid-Victorian conventions apart—and they were then very strong and cogent—I had worked so hard at serious music, I had loved it so much and been so successful, that it was not without a pang that I gave it all up to sing little songs and choruses that were, after all, child's play to me.

My record, for a girl of twenty, was quite remarkable, I can say so now without vanity. Singing—real singing—was my life. I loved it, I was proud of my position, and knew that it was rare indeed for a girl of my age to interpret serious music as I could do. It had meant great and prolonged effort ; more than that, it meant experiences of the mind, of the spirit, that few so young had been called upon to undergo. I was not only a butterfly, a laugh-

ing coquette ; Gilbert, who knew me so well, recognized that when he wrote for me the part of Iolanthe.

One hides one's real feelings, and smiles at the world in order that it may smile in return, but often my heart ached when I thought of those days when I lived in an atmosphere of music of the highest order, and could express my inmost self in it, as in no other way is possible. Do not think I was unhappy, far from it, success is sweet however it comes, but sometimes when I thought things over I felt how far I had fallen from that first austere ideal, and wished that fame and success could have come in a higher sphere.

Perhaps they never would ; perhaps physically, mentally, and in countless ways I was unfitted, and had done better to choose the easier path ; and at the time there are so many conflicting reasons and influences that one hardly knows when or why one's course has been chosen.

I had to study hard for my stage successes too, nothing came very easily. I had to learn the use of my speaking voice, I who never in

all my life had a lesson in elocution ; I had to dance, I with my stiff ankle, who had never had and never did have a lesson in dancing. All that took some study and some determination, and a great deal of " bluff," for I never confessed to ignorance or deficiencies, but set to work to learn and attain by my own unaided efforts.

But now when success was mine I had time quietly to consider what it was made of, and desire for other and higher forms of it re-awakened in my mind. All these years the necessity of earning a living had held me down —there is no stronger fetter. One thing leads to another, increased salary and higher status means more expense ; there never seemed a chance to break away. Then, as soon as one opera was fairly set going we had to begin rehearsing the next : and it was always " We must have you in it, Jessie," and " We can't do without you," from Gilbert, or Sullivan, or D'Oyley Carte ; so that I was never able to escape, though many chances offered.

This letter from Charles Wyndham refers to one of those chances :

CRITERION THEATRE
PICCADILLY W.
19*th June*, 1888

DEAR MISS BOND

I don't know whether the report is true, but I hear that you contemplate leaving the Savoy and are negotiating with the St. James's. If it is true I think I can offer you some very pleasant parts in pieces about to be produced, but, if not, consider this letter unwritten.

Yours very truly
CHAS. WYNDHAM

A year or two later Wyndham again approached me, offering me the part of Polly Eccles in "Caste." He saw in me the makings of a good comedy and character actress, and a part like that would have gratified my ambition and urged me to fresh efforts. But I didn't do it; the chains that bound me were too strong; perhaps it was cowardice, I hardly know now, but I refused. This letter from Wyndham refers to my refusal:

CRITERION THEATRE
PICCADILLY W.
May 21*st*, 1890

MY DEAR MISS BOND

In consideration of my disappointment in

not having you for Polly Eccles, I want you, if you will, to kindly strain a point and play your little "Locked Out," which, by the way, I have never yet seen, with Barrington, for the benefit of the Holy Cross Orphanage. It is on the fifth of June. It shall not give you any trouble, and you will confer a very important favour upon myself upon whom the duty of organization devolved. I play a little piece also, so we can condole with each other. I shall send down to-night for your answer, and, please, don't say "No."

Yours sincerely
CHAS. WYNDHAM

Nor was Wyndham the only one who about this time dangled the attractions of the legitimate stage before my eyes. A note from Brandon Thomas refers to yet another of my refusals to desert the Savoy Opera :

45 CADOGAN TERRACE, S.W.

MY DEAR MISS BOND

I am sorry—you know *I* see you in the part and I see what the little part would become in your hands, can't I persuade you to come and talk it over?

Yours sincerely
BRANDON THOMAS

P.S. Mrs. B.T. tells me to say 4.30 any day to see *her*.

CHAPTER IX

CONSTANT dripping, they say, wears away a stone. These many efforts to detach me from the Savoy were not entirely successful, yet they unsettled me to some extent, and certainly they gave me a higher estimate of my own worth, and strengthened my determination to get the increase of salary for which I was always agitating.

Gilbert, as I have said before, sympathized with my desire to shine as an actress, a sympathy by no means shared by Sullivan ; who on the contrary curbed all such desires on my part and tried always to keep me a humble-minded and subordinate member of the Company. How far from natural or agreeable such a rôle was to me I can leave you to judge !

One effort on the part of Gilbert to further my ambitions and determination on the part of Sullivan to squash them, also indicated a

certain tension in the personal relations of the two men which had already existed for some little time, and was soon to become so serious as to dissolve the most delightful of artistic partnerships.

Gilbert had written a play called "Broken Hearts"—not musical—which he wished to produce in the Savoy, with me in the principal part. But Sullivan would not consent to lend the theatre, refusing on the ground that it would create a precedent, and that all the other members of the Company would be wanting to do likewise; so the scheme had to be abandoned, to Gilbert's great annoyance and my disappointment. The whole affair rankled very much in Gilbert's mind. He was, there is no doubt, a man of much greater sensibility than his partner, and the churlishness of Sullivan's conduct hurt him deeply.

But, kind as he was to me, and willing to help me to get anything he thought it right I should have, as he says in a letter previously quoted, there were limits beyond which he would not go, and he could hit out straight from the shoulder, as the next letter proves. I

may mention that by this time I had appeared in "Ruddigore" and "The Yeomen of the Guard," with what success you know, and the contract in question was for the new opera, "The Gondoliers." My salary was then twenty pounds a week.

BREAKSPEARS
UXBRIDGE
22 *Sept.* 89

My dear Jessie

I am distressed to learn that you decline to renew under £30 a week—distressed because although nobody alive has a higher appreciation of your value as a most accomplished artist than I—no consideration would induce me to consent to such a rise.

While I do not forget how much the success of our pieces has been due to you, *you* must not forget how much of your success has been due to the parts written for you by Sullivan and myself. You have been most carefully measured by both of us—and I think you will admit, not unsuccessfully. Finally it would distress me greatly to lose you after so many years' association,—undisturbed, as far as I am concerned, by a single unpleasantness—but I cannot let my personal regard and esteem for you blind me to the fact that my partners have to be considered. I hope for your own

sake (for engagements lasting 12 or 13 years, with parts written expressly for you, don't turn up every day) that you will reconsider the matter. I hope for our own sakes that you will not deprive us of the services of an artist whom we all regard with an affection which is quite apart from business considerations.

Yours affectionately
W. S. GILBERT

But I got my thirty pounds a week! Sullivan and Carte both supported my demand, and Gilbert was overruled. He hated that; he never could bear to climb down—do any of us like it?—but he, particularly, and rather childishly, resented opposition.

The fact of the matter was, that continual demands from the principals for higher salaries had got on his nerves. Every piece that appeared was a greater success than the last; and, though Gilbert and Sullivan were the creators, we were not slow to point out that on us depended at least half of the success. At last Gilbert, exasperated, declared that he would write a play with no principal parts; every character should be on the same footing and have equal prominence; and "The Gondoliers"

AS TESSA
IN 'THE GONDOLIERS

was the result. Nevertheless I (pertinacious little wretch) persisted in my demands, and as they couldn't afford to lose me I got my thirty pounds ; but I was the only one who asked for a rise, and Gilbert was furious with me.

All the time we were rehearsing he never spoke to me, and only acknowledged my existence by sometimes saying sneeringly :

" Make way for the High-Salaried Artiste ! "

By way of retaliation, being a spiteful little demon, I walked through my part woodenly, never giving the least indication of what I meant to do with it until the first dress rehearsal, when I let myself go and showed them what I was made of.

Gilbert was enchanted ; all his ill-humour vanished like mist in the sunshine. Directly the curtain fell, while we were still all grouped on the stage together, he rushed up to me and kissed me before all the Company, saying :

" Jessie, my dear ! I had no idea that so much could be made of so small a part ! "

I was really awfully touched and pleased ; but sinner that I was, I perked my little nose up and shook myself and walked off, saying :

"Perhaps you think I'm worth my salary *now*!"

Passing storms like this did occasionally ruffle the course of our friendship, but on the whole it flowed on deep and strong.

And here I should like to explain my own point of view, and defend myself from a possible charge of ingratitude and greed.

It is quite true that the parts had been written for me, and that my association with Gilbert and Sullivan had lasted for many years; but that fact spoke well for me as well as for them. During those years they had been immensely successful, and it was only fair that a loyal member of their Company who had stuck to them as I had done should share in that success. I had resisted all efforts to draw me away from them, as the foregoing letters have shown, and my salary of twenty pounds a week was certainly not adequate for the parts I was playing, and my undisputed drawing power. What would a music-hall artist say to it now? And even in those days I knew it to be unsuitable to my position in the Company and to the brilliance of the occasion. The Gilbert

and Sullivan era was at its height, and London awaited the production of this latest opera, "The Gondoliers," with even more pleasure and curiosity than had greeted its predecessors. We were all vowed to secrecy, and determined to let no hint of plot or music escape us. The scores were kept carefully locked up and every precaution was taken to baffle prying journalists eager for copy. They knew the scene was laid in Venice, but beyond that, nothing. One enterprising youth, determined to invent what he could not discover, wrote for his paper a highly imaginative description of the first act, and of the curtain rising on a chorus of young men in flannels and blazers, singing :

> We're young men of Venice
> We play at lawn tennis
> In blazers of various hues—

If his readers accepted that as truth, so much the greater was their enlightenment.

Since "Mikado," in which my success had been outstanding, I had created the parts of Mad Margaret in "Ruddigore" and Phœbe in "The Yeomen of the Guard." Of all my parts Mad Margaret was the one I liked best

and was proudest of, for it gave me the chance to show what I really could do as an actress.

At the first reading of "Ruddigore" Gilbert said to me:

"Here you are, Jessie, this is the part I've written for you. Carte and Sullivan think it's too big for you, but take it home and learn it, and we'll see."

I learnt it, putting in my best efforts, as you may suppose; but Sullivan was still not convinced, and before I was finally selected to play it he insisted on a sort of private view, to satisfy himself that I was competent. I had to appear before those three, Gilbert and Sullivan and D'Oyley Carte, one morning in cold blood, and say my little piece on the half-lighted stage. It was an awful ordeal.

I saw the three white faces looming out of the darkness as they sat close together; criticizing me, talking me over, with cold managerial detachment. It nearly killed me—perhaps it gave an added realism and abandon to my simulated madness, for indeed I was nearly mad with fear—but at any rate I came through triumphantly, they were all three of them delighted.

So was I, it is needless to say ; I loved that part and played it with all my heart and soul, and with a success that I shall bring an independent witness to attest. And may I say here that I played it with restraint and on a low note, as a country girl in a ragged serge skirt, with straws in her tousled hair but no flowing locks or diaphanous garments ; no shrieks, no excitement or striving after effect, but the impression I made was deep and lasting.

I remember that on the day of the first performance I had worked and worried myself into a state of hysteria and tears, and my poor father, who had come up to London to see me in this new and important part, was in despair.

"You *must* stop crying, Jessie," he said. "If you go on like this you won't be able to sing a note, my dear child," and he did his best to soothe and steady me. "You must have some brandy, something to give you courage. I'll get some and bring it to the stage-door."

He did so, but they wouldn't let him in—that shows how strict our discipline was ! The doorkeeper didn't know him.

"You say you're Miss Bond's father—humph

—that's all very fine. How do *I* know who you are?"

So the poor dear had to go away again, and I to do without my brandy.

I shook and tottered so much that Mad Margaret's staff was no mere adjunct, but an absolute necessity, without it I should have fallen as I stood in the wings waiting to go on. Then some one gave me a push—I was there, on the stage, in the glare of the footlights, hundreds of eyes fixed on me, tier upon tier of dim white faces rising from floor to ceiling in the gloom. It was enough; I forgot myself, I was Mad Margaret and no one else. I made an immense success.

The following is an extract from Cellier and Bridgeman's book on Gilbert, Sullivan and D'Oyley Carte:

"There were two particularly noteworthy features in the performance of 'Ruddigore.' First to be mentioned was the acting of Miss Jessie Bond in the part of Mad Margaret. Among the host of her admirers few had given the popular Savoy soubrette credit for such

great ability as a genuine comedy-actress, for never before had the opportunity been afforded her to display her latent talent. Jessie Bond's triumph came as a surprise to all, but especially to those who were aware of the fact that her first appearance on any stage was in the insignificant part of Hebe in 'H.M.S. Pinafore.' So true to real life was the portrayal of Mad Margaret that Mr. Forbes Winslow, the famous authority on mental disorders, wrote a congratulatory letter to Miss Bond and inquired where she had found the model from which she had studied, and so faithfully copied the phases of insanity. No greater compliment could have been paid the actress."

Yes, I had travelled far since the days when one of my fellow-actors said that I struck him at rehearsal (of "Pinafore") "as a rather stodgy, not over-intelligent type of girl, showing very few signs of the strong personality and great artistic capabilities that were to make her a firm favourite of the public within a short time."

A very curious thing happened to me while

playing Mad Margaret, which I think may interest those who have leanings toward the occult. One night, when "Ruddigore" had already been running some months, I had the most extraordinary feeling that the man playing with me was not Barrington, but another actor who was taking the part of Sir Rupert Murgatroyd in a provincial company that was playing in Newcastle that same night. The illusion was to me so impressive that I spoke of it to others, and the strangest thing of all was that the actor in Newcastle wrote to me that he had had exactly the same experience, a vivid impression that I was playing the part of Mad Margaret with him, instead of the actress who actually did so. What were the impressions of Barrington and the other lady I don't know, apparently they went on as usual, but there was no doubt about the strange interchange of thought between Mr. X. and myself. People interested in those matters took it up, and there were letters and discussions in the newspapers. Some years afterwards, in 1893, I received a long letter from an inmate of the County Asylum at Prestwick, near Manchester,

of which I think extracts are interesting enough to be quoted. The whole letter is perfectly coherent and well thought out, the writer claiming to have had psychic experiences. He quotes Stead, Besant and Blavatsky, and mentions the usual Electric, Magnetic and other theories. But it is his description of his own mental state that is, I think, so pathetic and arresting, the experiences of a man whose mind is unhinged, and who is yet sane enough to know it, and to be an agonized observer of his own madness.

These are the passages :

" Speaking of my own experiences in the direction of abnormal imagination, I must tell you that they have all been in the first person, and that I have been led to imagine, and impelled to say things about myself, and this by a force antagonistic to my own mind. I was imbued temporarily with a dual reasoning or thought and was led to give expression to one in direct opposition to the other which I knew myself to be true, and this without the means of a visible operator, unless they were induced by the impression left upon my mind

by the presence of and the language used by other patients around me, as I lay upon a bed in a hospital.

"You can imagine for yourself the mental state produced, the terrorized condition of the same, by one who was led to say he was 'Jesus Christ,' 'the Devil himself' and such a person as Jack the Ripper, knowing full well at the same time that I was no such person, but still impelled by a resistless power to say it.

"During this period of illness or hallucination I was led to think about many persons and subjects which previously I never remember having known anything at all about, but am convinced I was in temporary communication with them, from the various opinions and impressions left upon my mind afterwards.

"There is one point in your letter in which I heartily concur. It is with regard to your opinion of the mistaken notion some people have, who think they are doing a very clever thing by keeping the truth back from invalids, keeping them in the dark as they call it. I feel certain that a little more outspokenness on the part of the 'faculty' with me would have

gone far to have relieved my mind, and saved me from the very painful position I at present occupy, that of being confined here as a lunatic."

My correspondent also speaks of the prostration which overcame me after that extraordinary experience, which was a very real result of it. I have since had other small experiences of the same nature, too trivial to recount here, but proving, I think, how thin a veil divides the seen from the unseen.

After "Ruddigore" came "The Yeomen of the Guard," and another triumph for me as Phœbe, though that part was of a very different nature to the exacting rôle of Mad Margaret. My share in the most beautiful of all the Gilbert and Sullivan operas was delightfully easy and natural. When Gilbert gave it to me at the first reading he said, "Here you are, Jessie, you needn't act this, it's you."

We all enjoyed playing in that opera, and I think did our best in it. We were at our ease, it was like a jolly game, so much so that my fellow-actors delighted in teasing me and trying to confuse me on the stage, and my naughty brother, Leonard Meryll (W. R. Shirley),

used to leave a lump of ice in my hand when he took it in the course of the play. That was disconcerting enough, but W. H. Denny as Wilfred seriously upset me one evening, without meaning to do so. He came on without his keys ; they had somehow become detached from his belt while he was waiting in the green-room. We began our scene together, and I was in despair when I found that the keys were not there, and I had nothing to steal ! Fortunately Dick Temple as Meryll, who was watching from the wings, saw that I was in trouble and what the matter was ; he found the keys and showed himself for a moment on the stage, holding them up ; so I acted my satisfaction and all ended smoothly. Here I must quote from Cellier and Bridgeman's book once again :

" Who that has witnessed this scene as originally played by Mr. W. H. Denny and Miss Jessie Bond can ever forget the effect it had upon the audience ? Once again the fascinating little Savoy soubrette displayed admirable skill as a comedy-actress. Nothing

could be more coquettish, more artistically artful than the manner in which the cunning Phœbe wheedled and deceived the unsuspecting Cerberus. This is one of the most amusing scenes in the opera, and never fails to meet with rapturous applause."

An anonymous letter from an apparently elderly admirer has this very flattering reference to my acting as Phœbe in "The Yeomen of the Guard."

"I doubt whether there is any lady old or young on our stage, who could fill your part as well and as satisfactorily in all respects as you do.

"Your singing voice is very good, your action simply charming, your dress is very tasteful and you look very pretty. You laugh and you cry in a manner so natural that it is difficult not to laugh and cry with you, and when you put up your cheek to be kissed one can but envy the stalwart warrior who has the privilege of responding to your invitation."

But the dear old gentleman tempers his praise by objecting to the amount of rouge I put on my upper lip. "Nature has given you

a very pretty mouth, keep it as it is. That deep patch of rouge in the centre of the upper lip rather disfigures it, and can only look well from the very back of the house." I sometimes feel inclined to offer a similar criticism to girls of to-day, who are *not* on the stage!

I remember the first night of "The Yeomen" very well. Gilbert was always dreadfully overwrought on these occasions, and this time he was almost beside himself with nervousness and excitement. He and Sullivan had both put their very best into the play, and he was more than usually anxious that all should go well. I am afraid he made himself a perfect nuisance behind the scenes, and did his best, poor fellow, to upset us all. These first nights were very hard on me as they were on all of us, they were glorious events but a terrible strain for everybody, and nearly always my understudy was called upon to officiate on the second night of a play, while I lay exhausted in my bed.

It will be remembered that the curtain rises on Phœbe alone at her spinning-wheel; and Gilbert kept fussing about, "Oh, Jessie, are you

W. H. DENNY AND JESSIE BOND AS WILFRID AND PHOEBE
IN 'THE YEOMEN OF THE GUARD'

sure you're all right?"—Jessie this—Jessie that—until I was almost as demented as he was.

At last I turned on him savagely. "For Heaven's sake, Mr. Gilbert, go away and leave me alone, or I shan't be able to sing a note!" He gave me a final frenzied hug, and vanished.

He exacted the most minute accuracy in scenery, dresses and properties, and would have everything of the very best. An ordinary stage spinning-wheel wouldn't suit him at all; he searched the antique shops for the real thing of the right period and found one, but it was so expensive that Carte would not buy it, so the dealer allowed him to hire it for the run of the piece. When the season ended I asked Carte if I might have it to keep, and he, forgetting that it was only hired, gave it to me. The property man stopped me as I was carrying it away, saying:

"Miss Bond, you can't take that away, it's not ours, it's only hired."

"I'm very sorry," I said, "but it has been given to me and I mean to keep it,"—and one of my most valued possessions it was for many years.

CHAPTER X

"THE Gondoliers" followed "Ruddigore" and "The Yeomen of the Guard" in December, 1889—what a succession of masterpieces! It was the apex of the Gilbert and Sullivan achievements, for man is but mortal, and even that brilliant pair found at last that the flow of their inspiration was decreasing. Their best work had been done, and the Gilbert and Sullivan of "Utopia" and "The Grand Duke" were not the jovial, easy-flowing, rollicking pair of early days. In my opinion they had got on each other's nerves, and there had been all sorts of ructions, big and little. The final break had to come, it was only a matter of time and occasion.

That was provided by the historic affair of the carpet, which was only a nail to hang the coat on. According to the terms of their contract, Gilbert was responsible for the librettos,

Sullivan for the music, and D'Oyley Carte for the theatre and the artists ; so that when he considered it necessary to lay down new carpets, and presented the bill to be paid by the three partners jointly, there was trouble. Such a detail was distinctly outside the province of Gilbert and Sullivan, and I consider that Gilbert was perfectly right in objecting. However, Carte controlled the theatre, the solid asset, and the artistic partnership had no bonds but an intangible intercourse of mind with mind, which was now not only slackening, but changing to antagonism. Nerves and tempers had been rasped too often, a breach was overdue, so Sullivan sided with Carte, and Gilbert severed his connection with the Savoy.

All this happened during the run of " The Gondoliers," perhaps the most successful of all the Gilbert and Sullivan productions. It ran for five hundred and fifty-four consecutive performances, and brought more grist to the managerial mill than any previous opera. Then, with success at its full tide, came the turning-point. There was a break of nearly two years, until peace was patched up again,

and "Utopia Limited" and "The Grand Duke" were written. But something was missing from those later productions, their creators

never could recapture
The first fine careless rapture.

And now I must tell you of a night (not a Sunday night either) right in the middle of that triumphant run of "The Gondoliers," when the house was crowded to the doors—standing room only, house full, hundreds turned away, seats booked up months in advance—when suddenly the whole thing stopped. The theatre was dark and empty, and no blazing arc-lights illuminated the crowded Strand. What could it mean?

It meant that an almost unique honour had been conferred on "The Gondoliers," its creators, producers and the whole Company. We were "commanded" to play before Queen Victoria at Windsor Castle, and the bills pasted up outside the theatre, to announce the closing for one night, did not fail to draw attention to the glory of the occasion. I believe that Irving

had been commanded to play " The Bells " at Sandringham a short time before, but that was serious drama, and we, the Gilbert and Sullivan Opera Company, were the first to play comic opera before Her Majesty in Windsor Castle.

It was a great occasion at Windsor also, for the Queen had lived in strict retirement ever since the death of the Prince Consort, and there had been no such entertainment at the Castle for thirty years. This was the first break in that long period of mourning, and the occasion was made still more memorable by the presence of the Empress Frederic of Germany, the Queen's recently widowed daughter. We heard that Her Majesty had chosen our show from among all the excellent ones appearing in London at that time, because she particularly liked the music of " The Gondoliers," and thought that the bright and sparkling piece would give pleasure to the Empress. Need I tell you how immensely proud we were of the distinction conferred on our theatre and on all of us, and how determined to do better than our best on the great night ?

We had a special train, and left Paddington about midday ; a company of fully two hundred persons, actors, orchestra, and stage hands, together with the whole equipment for the play. It was a great business getting us started with dresses and scenery and all etceteras complete, but Carte was a great general.

We arrived, and passed through gates and courtyards and past sentries, and ran the gauntlet of all sorts of high officials. It was difficult not to get excited, nervous or depressed in such unusual circumstances, but we had to keep our heads ; and to steady us down and accustom us to the improvised stage there was a two hours' rehearsal of the whole piece, though we had been playing it for months and knew our parts backwards. The stage, erected in the magnificent Waterloo Chamber, was much smaller than the one we were used to, so a rehearsal was very necessary, and the familiar music and action restored our self-possession.

At four o'clock, dead tired and very hungry, we were released for rest and refreshment : boiled eggs and bread and butter that was, I

remember, and personally I could have done with something more solid and more dainty. However, it was served in another magnificent "Chamber"—I suppose the ordinary word "room" is not grand enough for a Royal Castle. Afterwards, a very charming and courtly gentleman, with an immense quantity of hair and a beard that must have been nearly as long as Barbarossa's, took charge of me and showed me the State Apartments and some of the artistic treasures in that splendid home of our Royal Family.

I'm afraid I've always been a naughty little puss, and have never learnt to order myself lowly and reverently toward my betters. I am sure my comments were fresh and candid, and I blushed for myself afterwards, when I heard that my dignified escort was Sir Dighton Probyn, Comptroller of the Household to Queen Victoria, and afterwards to King Edward. He was kindness and politeness itself; but I wonder what he thought of me—I was a new species to him, I suppose. Or perhaps he took it for granted that the topsy-turvy and irreverent atmosphere of the Kingdom of Barataria, in

which I had lived for more than a year, had fatally undermined my character. At any rate he never blenched, even when I referred to Her Most Gracious Majesty Queen Victoria as "The Old Lady."

The Castle clocks struck nine as the curtain rose on our merry contadine binding posies for the gondoliers. No applause—or so little as hardly to count—it was difficult not to feel disconcerted by the courtly reserve of our audience. But soon embarrassment wore off, and the performance went with a splendid swing. After the first act we were told that the Queen was greatly pleased, and after hearing that we did better than ever.

It was a memorable sight from the stage—so far as I in my excitement could take it in—the splendid room so magnificently decorated, with its indefinable atmosphere of the Court. The Queen and her guests were separated from the stage by a bank of flowers and foliage, and in front, in the centre, in august isolation, sat Victoria R.I., in her black dress and widow's cap. On a table beside her were beautifully bound copies of the score and of

the words; and a jewelled opera-glass. She was apparently well acquainted with the music, and often beat time with her fan. The Empress Frederic sat near the Queen, and behind them, in arm-chairs spaciously disposed, the rest of the exalted company.

I have said that there was little applause. What should we do in the theatre without our warm-hearted pit and gallery crowds? The stalls and boxes are never so exuberant in their delight, and this royal and noble audience was even more restrained. I should think Barrington must have been aghast at his own temerity when he sang or rather spoke his song about the troubles of a king, and I know that even I quaked a little as we began our quartet "A Right-down Regular Royal Queen." But these numbers seemed to amuse the real Queen more than anything else in the opera, and, indeed, who could so well as she see the point of them? The very fact of her choosing this opera from all the others to be played before her shows how vivid was her sense of fun, and how truly British was her willingness to laugh at herself.

There was little applause—I must say it

again—and only one encore, which made the glory of that one all the greater. And who do you suppose was singled out for that honour? Who but I who write this, little Jessie Bond! Yes, *I* had an encore, and a perfect ovation, for my song in the first act, "When a Merry Maiden Marries." It surprised me beyond measure, and I think all the rest of the Company too. I never liked that song, it did not seem to go with the right swing, and the Savoy audiences did not greatly care for it either, so I was all the more astonished and delighted when it was re-demanded by an audience led by the First Lady in the Land. And picture to yourself "if you can, if you can," what a happy evening that encore made for me!

It was over, we danced our last Cachucha and the curtain fell, and we were all triumphantly happy, for even through the stately reserve that hedges Queens we felt the pulsing flow of appreciation and pleasure. As the curtain rose again, showing us all in our places, the Queen herself rose, and bowing to her guests and then to us she retired with her suite. That memorable evening was over.

It was then after midnight. We changed and supped, and caught our special train to London ; arriving at Paddington in the cold light of dawn, tired to death, but happy beyond words.

Now behind the scenes, unknown to that noble company, which would have been shocked and scandalized to the last degree, something happened that has never yet been recorded, another prank of Jessie Bond, the incorrigible.

Our dressing-rooms were a series of screened and curtained cubicles in the great Throne Room, and my particular corner was next to a gilded railing, high and strong and fiercely spiked, enclosing a no less sacred object than the Golden Throne of England ! Why did they put *me* next to it, me of all people ! Dazzling, unapproachable, awe-inspiring ; it stood there empty and solemn ; but I poked a pert nose through the railing and began plotting against its majesty.

" I want to sit in it," I said. " I *must* get in."

The others jeered at me, half shocked, half

contemptuous. "Jessie! what an idea! Any way, you can't. Those railings are too high to climb, and even you can't squeeze through them, sprat as you are."

"I'll try," and I did try, but the space was too narrow, even for me. The spikes couldn't be climbed over, they were horrible spikes, dangerous spikes, and I didn't want to be impaled. But still I went nosing round, trying every possible means. Not through, not over —but perhaps under! The lower spikes did not touch the floor; they, too, were horribly sharp, but, what with the space underneath them and the spaces between, the protuberances of one's body might perhaps be wedged through.

"You'll never do it," the girls said, watching my antics.

"What will you bet?"

"Half a crown," said somebody.

"Done," said I.

But it wasn't as simple as all that. I flattened myself out like a cat, and wriggling on the floor I tried to work myself under those spikes, but they caught on my clothes and I

was stuck. My clothes must come off, then. I shed one garment after another, making a fresh attempt every time. Off came something else—we wore lots of " undies " in those days. A circle of girls, half horrified, half amused, watched the proceedings. I was getting down to bed-rock, or rather to bare skin—one thing more, and now nothing was left but a skimpy vest to cover my nakedness. Again I spread myself out on the floor, the spikes caught my last remaining garment and tore it to shreds ; but what did I care, I was through ! I climbed the steps to that golden throne and there I sat almost naked ; scratched, bruised, in one tattered rag ; while the girls knelt and saluted Queen Jessie of the Savoy, seated on the Golden Throne of England !

I shivered then with cold and excitement. I shiver still—but with horror at my own colossal impudence !

CHAPTER XI

IN 1891 we played "The Nautch Girl" at the Savoy, our first departure from Gilbert and Sullivan opera. It was quite successful, though no inferior vintage could really satisfy palates accustomed to the delightful blend of wit and melody which had flowed from the Two, who

> United had sung
> As one individual.

In this year my contract with Carte was for thirty-five pounds a week, rising to forty pounds under certain conditions, so you see I was getting on. That contract also contained an interesting clause, which showed that the bonds by which the Savoy held me were beginning to loosen, it entitled me to leave of absence for three months, with option of another three to follow. I took the first leave, then again

Carte tightened his hold, and refused to let me have the second.

My three months' leave was spent, not in resting or in holiday-making, but in hard work. Barrington and I, both great favourites with the public (he speaks of me in his book as "My little comrade Jessie Bond, who was gifted with a personality which made her a universal favourite"), wished to try a provincial tour together, thinking that a change from years of steady theatre work might be not only pleasant but profitable.

Barrington had written three little playlets for two characters, which his friend Solomon set to pretty music; these were our répertoire; we took a pianist with us, and that was all the company. We had an amusing, but fairly hard time; we played in a different town every night; and, having no understudies, it was sometimes a good deal of a strain. I remember being ill once and going to the local doctor to be patched up. He said I was not fit to act, but I said I must, the seats were all taken and we were not going to return the money, so that I must go through with it, and I did.

It was a great success, that little tour, and my share of the profits was never less than seventy-five pounds a week, more than ever I got from Gilbert and Sullivan. But I returned to London and was caught again. Carte would not release me for another three months. I am sure they missed me at the theatre; they said I was a Mascot to them all, and when I went away with Barrington, though it was only for three months, I was given a silver-mounted scent-bottle inscribed "With love from The Girls, Savoy Theatre," and the men of the chorus gave me a beautiful set of Shakespeare's works, with an inscription of which I am very proud:

"These volumes are presented to Miss Jessie Bond by a few Savoyards, in token of the esteem and affection held by all for her, and as a mark of regret at her leaving—even though for a short time—the boards on which she has achieved such success and won so many friends, January, 1892. (Signed) PARIS, LEON, LAIDLAW, RAMSEY, WILBRAHAM, MONTELLI, PHILLIPS, BARRETT, HASWELL, LETTS, BARNARD, and FRASER."

Both of these gifts are still among my treasures.

Following "The Nautch Girl," Carte revived "The Vicar of Bray" at the Savoy, an opera which had already been successful in another theatre. Sydney Grundy wrote the words, and Edward Solomon the music, but there was no part for me in it, as Grundy in the following note freely admits.

WINTER LODGE
ADDISON ROAD, W.
30/12/91

DEAR MISS BOND

Between ourselves, you must abandon all thoughts of playing Nelly Bly. She is, I find, absolutely *nothing*, and as the piece is constructed, it is impossible to write her up. I am not exaggerating. She is simply a speaking chorister, with a song. I was hoping to be able to improve her, but I find I can't. Every speech I write for her reads so dragged in and superfluous that I destroy them as soon as they're written. I cannot even get a second song in at all naturally.

My experience of writing up parts is, that the part is seldom improved, and the piece is invariably injured. Audiences are very quick to detect interpolated matter.

This is, of course, my private tip to you. I am much disappointed, for I had rather you

had a good part than anybody, but the production of "The Vicar" at the Savoy is not my doing at all. It was practically settled before I knew anything about it.

Sincerely yours
SYDNEY GRUNDY

"The Vicar of Bray" ran for six months, after which the Savoy was closed for three, the longest vacation in all its existence. At this time I was on tour with Barrington, and Gilbert at the Lyric had produced an opera written by himself and Alfred Cellier. It was charming, both words and music, and Gilbert in writing it had Barrington and me in his mind. He offered me the part of Columbine, but I refused. I really had no choice, I was bound to Carte by so many ties. He had given me my first chance, we had worked together for years, I did not feel then that I could leave him. Nevertheless refusal cut me to the heart, not only because I hated disappointing Gilbert, but because I loved the part he had written for me. All my life I have wanted to play a Columbine part; some of my earliest recollections are of picturing myself in short fluffy

skirts, dancing about on the tips of my toes, with arms outspread, and little silver bells jingling. Barrington would have been an ideal Clown, Gilbert measured him correctly also, he knew us both inside out, and that we were made to play together. We understood each other to the last shred; the fractional lift of an eyebrow, the least inflection of the voice, was hint enough from one of us to the other. Gilbert, in a letter I shall quote later, speaks of Barrington without me as being like a flint without steel.

But "The Mountebanks" was produced without us, and was only a moderate success—I feel sure that we could have made it a great one. I reproduce the letter in which Gilbert asks me to join him and one written by Sir Arthur Sullivan when he heard of the offer.

GRIM'S DYKE
HARROW WEALD
7th Dec. 90

MY DEAR JESSIE

Are you willing to entertain the question of an engagement to play an excellent part in the piece I am writing for the Lyric (with Cellier) to be produced next October?

It would give me great pleasure to know that you are open to an offer.

Yours always
W. S. Gilbert

And this is Sullivan's letter :

1 Queen's Mansions
Victoria Street, S.W.
Saturday

Dear Jessie

I am horrified to think that you are going to leave me in the lurch, and not sing in my next Savoy piece, which I hope to have ready towards the end of this year. Carte has told me all about the question of terms, time, etc., and I really think that his proposal is a very fair one and one that you might well accept. If for a few pounds a year more, you are going to throw over your old friends and associates (and associations) and join the Lyric Theatre, I shall feel peculiarly aggrieved and hurt, for reasons which I can explain to you personally but do not care to put on paper.

Do think over this, and be reasonable, if only for the sake of your old friend

Arthur Sullivan

At that time I was drawing forty pounds a week from the treasury, and my salary rose to forty-five pounds before I left, while outside

the Savoy connection constant inducements were held out to me by other managers. Henry Arthur Jones, writing to me about this time, says : " When is comic opera going to restore you to comedy ? It's a shameful robbery."

Meanwhile, Sullivan in conjunction with Sydney Grundy was writing " Haddon Hall," and now I come to the story of my own break with the Savoy. Since Gilbert left it, my kind and constant friend, it had not been the same place to me. He had written my parts for me, he had upheld my cause many times against Sullivan and Carte. Now Grundy—another G.—was writing with Sir Arthur, and Grundy was my good friend too, and wished me to have a part worthy of my powers.

This he gave me in his first version of " Haddon Hall," but when he submitted the manuscript to Sir Arthur, the latter said :

" Why, this is all Jessie Bond. You must leave out this, and this, and this," striking his blue pencil through all the best parts.

Grundy was very much annoyed, both on my account and on his own, but he did not hold the strong position with regard to Sulli-

van and the Savoy that Gilbert had held, and he was obliged to submit. The opera was finished accordingly, but when my abbreviated part was offered to me at the first reading I refused to take it.

"Sir Arthur," I said, "there is nothing in this part for me—nothing that a chorus girl at five pounds a week could not do quite well. It is not worthy of my position in the Company or of my reputation as an actress, and I refuse to accept it."

He was very angry, and my refusal was no doubt an embarrassment for the moment, but he would not depart from his position, nor would I depart from mine. This, then, was my reason for leaving the Savoy Opera Company in which I had played continuously for sixteen years, growing with its growth, sharing its triumphs and successes, and making its welfare a part of my very life. I went back to it afterwards for revivals, when Gilbert also had buried the hatchet and reunited himself to the Triumvirate, but the old associations had been broken and the old enthusiasms had evaporated. Nevertheless I am glad to re-

member that it was on the stage of the Savoy Theatre, surrounded by old friends and in one of the most brilliant of the Gilbert and Sullivan productions, that I made my last appearance as a professional actress.

Sullivan wrote me the following letter a few days before "Haddon Hall" was produced, and I give it without comment:

1 QUEEN'S MANSIONS
VICTORIA STREET, S.W.
Friday, 16 *Sept.*

MY DEAR JESSIE

I write a line to ask you not to press your request to come to the first performance of my new opera on Saturday.

To see you there would in the first place add very much to my disappointment at not having you in the cast of my work, and secondly it would not be quite fair to the girl who is trying her best to fill the gap caused by your leaving. It would make her very nervous, and you are too kind-hearted to wish to do any harm to a young beginner.

If I could put you anywhere where you would not be seen it would be different—but I can't, and your presence would become known instantly and lead to sure and certain embarrassment.

Come on Tuesday night (Monday is such a dull and depressing night, as you know), and if you will let me know at once you shall have stalls or a box (if there is one).

Would you like to come to the Band rehearsals for the Leeds Festival the week after next at St. James's Hall?

Your affect. friend
ARTHUR SULLIVAN

During the next few years I played in "His Excellency," "Ma Mie Rosette," "Go Bang," "Green Bushes," and "Wapping Old Stairs" in different theatres. I went back to the Savoy for revivals, and my last appearance on the stage was as Pitti Sing in "The Mikado." Here is the letter in which Gilbert expressed the pleasure it gave him to welcome me back to the fold.

GRIM'S DYKE
HARROW WEALD
25*th Oct.* 95

MY DEAR JESSIE

I'm delighted to hear that you're to play in the Mikado—for you were the life and soul of the piece. Barrington without you is flint without steel (in that piece), as I told Carte three weeks since.

AS PITTI SING
IN 'THE MIKADO'

I don't know what to say about the new song. Even if we could find a place for it (very difficult), there is Sullivan to be reckoned with and I doubt very much if he would care to put aside the new piece upon which he is working night and day, in order to write a song for Mikado.

He is like me in one respect (only in one)—when he is in full swing of his work, as he is now, he won't stand interruption. However, I'll speak to him about it, for he's one of those who think that, in comic opera, one can't well have too much of you.

Yours always
W. S. GILBERT

Some of the commendation so freely bestowed when they thought they were losing me would have sweetened my lot considerably in the early years of my stage life. I don't know why it was—perhaps they thought I was too cocky, too sure of myself and my own value to them—but I used to be left severely alone at rehearsals, and often wondered why no one took any trouble to coach me. Gilbert used patiently to teach the others, sometimes word by word—with Grossmith, for one, he took infinite pains—but never a word to me.

"Why do you never do anything to help *me*, Mr. Gilbert?" I asked him once.

"Oh, you're all right, Jessie," he said impatiently, with a wave of his hand.

I suppose he thought my parts were easier and more natural to me as a woman than Grossmith's bizarre characterizations, but I often used to feel hurt by the way I was ignored at rehearsals. Even they, however, were not as bad as first nights. Then, the Three used to go round congratulating and patting everybody on the back—everybody except poor little me. It was

> One for thou and one for thee
> One for you and one for ye
> But never, oh never, a one for me!

Often I have gone home and cried myself to sleep, thinking "Why don't they ever praise me? I can't be as good as I thought I was." But generally the audience liked me so much that no doubt Gilbert and Sullivan and Carte thought more praise would be superfluous and go to my head, and that on the contrary I needed a little suppressing!

I must, however, mention one exception to

the usual rule of leaving me to my own devices at rehearsals. We were studying "Iolanthe," and had hammered at it until the unearthly hour of four in the morning. They made me sing my song "He loves," standing up and sitting down and kneeling and with every possible variety of emphasis and shade of meaning, until I was perfectly exhausted.

"You're singing flat, Jessie," Sullivan snapped at me.

"Flat!" I said. "The wonder is that I can sing at all at this hour—and I'm not going to try again!"

CHAPTER XII

LOOKING back over my life, it seems to have been spent mostly in public ; acting, rehearsing, singing ; myself subordinated to my parts, my time belonging to audiences and managers. Yet the busiest of us has another life, secret, sacred, uninterrupted ; that I had also, and through it ran the course of a friendship growing always more and more tender, a thread of gold weaving itself ever more closely into the pattern of my days.

You have not forgotten my account of meeting Lewis Ransome during the run of "Mikado"? He saw me first as Pitti Sing, he liked me and my big sash and my piquant ways—or so he told me—and we met soon after and talked about America on the roof of the "Healtheries." Just accident, perhaps—or perhaps not ; he had theatrical friends, and could engineer a meeting if he wished, so after

SYBIL GREY, LEONORA BRAHAM, JESSIE BOND AS THE 'THREE LITTLE MAIDS FROM SCHOOL' IN 'THE MIKADO'

the tea-party we were fellow-guests again, this time of somebody who gave a launch party on the river.

So far, there was nothing in it on either side. I was a popular actress at the height of her popularity. I was having my fill of admiration and attention. Mr. Ransome was agreeable and interesting, he was different to most of the men I met, and I liked talking to him ; but a man more or less was nothing to me, and as for any serious attachment, I was far from wishing or foreseeing it, love-making and marriage were to me evil dreams of the past.

As for Mr. Ransome, I am sure that in those days he did not think seriously of me either ; he liked me, but he liked others too.

That launch party—I remember it so well. The shining reaches of the river, the dark battalions of beech trees marching to the brink and leaning gravely over to listen to our laughter. We startled the wildfowl and sent them scurrying to shelter, we sang and joked and made merry and desecrated the woodland solitudes as youth has done in all the ages. There was one among the guests who might

have been a wood-nymph masquerading as a girl of the period—put her in floating draperies, and a wreath of vine-leaves on her ruddy curls, and she would have passed for a lovely young Bacchante. That was Rose Norreys, a charming actress of the day, and no wonder that Lewis Ransome looked upon her and found that she was fair. We drew up at a rustic landing-stage, and wandered off by twos and threes into the wood ; and Lewis drew Rose away with him alone into the labyrinth. Was I piqued ?—perhaps, I am not above human weakness—but whether or no, I was as usual ready for any devilment, and when they did not come back to the launch with the others I persuaded the captain to go on to the next landing-stage, and let them rejoin us there. A long walk it was and a hot one, on that warm summer day, and I'll wager Master Lewis got tired of his wood-nymph, and she of him !

He was a gay young fellow of twenty-five in those days ; attractive, full of fun, and as ready to run after a pretty girl as the rest of them. Already he was beginning to stand out

as a man of promise, and his profession of civil engineering introduced him in good scientific circles. He belonged to a well-known Quaker family, and was cousin to the Ransome of Ransome, Sims, and Jeffries, whose garden mowers were then shaving the lawns of cottage and mansion alike all over England ; so he came of substantial, well-to-do stock, a firm foundation for a vigorous youth to build on.

He bore me no malice for that river escapade, in fact he came with a number of the other guests to supper in my flat in Gower Street that night, and on further acquaintance, notwithstanding my flippancy and casual ways, he found he liked me better than Rose Norreys or anybody else, and soon took every opportunity of telling me so. As you know, marriage was far from my thoughts just then ; but Lewis was not unduly discouraged, he had the quiet tenacity of the man who means to succeed in the long run, and settled down to a patient siege of nearly twelve years.

" I will never marry," I told him, " while I remain on the stage, and I am by no means ready to leave it yet."

"I'll wait until you *are* ready," was the reply, and we left it at that.

We became firm friends quite independently of love-making or thought of marriage, but for our eventual marriage it was certainly the best possible preparation. We spent long quiet Sundays in the country, generally on the river, when he told me his thoughts, wishes, plans and ambitions, and I told him mine. He used to call for me at the flat in Gower Street where I lived when I first knew him. At nine o'clock on Sunday morning there was he in a hansom with a well-stocked hamper on the roof, waiting to whisk me off to Paddington Station, where we caught the train to Richmond or Maidenhead. Then a punt, cushions, the lunch-basket, all our little comforts, and a long placid day on the smooth-flowing river. Oh, the blessed peace of that day, after the feverish six of my working week!

"What a change this sort of thing is for me," I told him. "My Sundays have always been as busy as any of the other days."

"I thought you stopped your choir-singing when you went on the stage."

"No, I sang in Voysey's church until quite recently, and in the evenings I used to go to Whitechapel and entertain the poor Jews."

"After your long week's work!"

"Yes, seven performances every week, *and* rehearsals. But Nellie Farren and I and a few others thought we'd like to do our bit in the slums, so we used to slip down and give the poor things a treat. They enjoyed it."

"I bet they did," he said, much interested.

"*I* didn't, always," I went on. "One night I was a bit off colour and dreadfully tired, and the room we sang in was crammed to the doors—it always was that. This night, though, it had been raining and all the windows were closed, and the smell—East End smell—poverty, wet clothes, dirty people—ugh!"

"I know."

"Well, it was too much for me, I flopped down on the floor in a faint."

"Poor little Jess!"

"Oh, I got no pity from Nellie Farren. She said 'Get up, Jessie, you fool, or I'll come and sit on your chest.'"

"And did she?"

"I don't know. Even that awful threat failed to rouse me. I couldn't sing that night."

"You've worked too hard, Jessie, my dear. It's your turn to rest now. Oh, if you'd only let me take care of you . . ."

He worked hard himself, and was often away travelling to remote and savage places in his capacity as civil engineer. One of these expeditions was to Tamatave in Madagascar, where his mission was to change the course of a river, taming it to some irrigation or water conservation scheme. In this he was completely successful, and the letters F.R.G.S. and M.I.C.E after his name bear witness to his achievements and to public recognition of them. When he returned after any of his exploits he always had plenty to tell me, all the more because I hated long letters either to read or to write. I never wrote a love-letter or a long one in my life, and gave him strict injunctions not to do so either. It was all saved up for our next happy meeting. Then I heard the traveller's tales: great adventures, hairbreadth escapes, for his duties took him to

wild places in strange company, and his experiences lost nothing in the telling. He was a keen sportsman, had hunted big game in Africa and the Rockies, and could tell a moving story of dodging death by the fraction of an inch.

Othello and Desdemona—"She loved him for the dangers he had passed"—at any rate she admired him; but suddenly Desdemona would sit up and begin to tell adventures of her own.

"I'm tired of all your hunting stories, Lewis. *I* can venture into lions' dens too—London Society lions. Guess where I was yesterday."

"How can I, you wonderful, unaccountable little creature? Nothing you could do would surprise me."

"Oh!" I was half-gratified, half-disappointed to have my sensation discounted. "Well, I went to an At Home at Sir Cyril Flower's. You know,—that big house near the Marble Arch."

"I know—very smart company for you. Well?"

"Well, I sang."

"I've no doubt you did, and very sweetly too. Is that all?"

"No, it's not all. Who do you think accompanied me? No less a person than Paolo Tosti! You know enough to realize what an honour that was for me!"

He was duly impressed. "Not that you don't deserve to be accompanied by Apollo himself."

I brushed away compliments. "But that isn't all, who do you think was there?"

"All fashionable London, I suppose."

"Nearly. But—Queen Alexandra was there, what do you think of *that*, my dear!"

Ah, I'd got him now! He sat up, and looked at me with those queer, softly penetrating eyes of his. "Was she, indeed?—sweet woman! And did she—of course she liked your singing."

"She liked it so well that she asked to have me presented to her, and told me so herself."

So I kept my end up, and had a professional or social triumph to cap every one of his Wild West stories.

Poor dear Lewis! not that he minded, he

admired me, and enjoyed my triumphs as though they had been his own, in spite of a very natural jealousy of my stage life and all connected with it. He wanted to monopolize me, and hated to feel that I belonged to the public and could be gazed at any night by anyone who chose to pay for a seat in the theatre. Even as a friend and would-be lover he was not alone, I was free to accept attentions and hospitalities from other men, and often did so. But he sat back and waited and never complained, though I knew what he thought.

"Let me show you a note I've just received," I said to him one day. It was Christmas time, and we had both been giving and receiving presents from all our friends.

"More of the big-wigs deigning to smile on little Jessie?" he inquired loftily.

"Read it, and don't try to be funny."

This was the note.

18 HOTHAM GARDENS
24. 12. 88.

DEAR LITTLE PHŒBE

Many, many thanks for your kind wishes. Now that I have shaken my own hands for

joy at the delightful surprise occasioned by the receipt of your card, I must congratulate with all my heart both you and the artist, for never have I seen more graceful handling of a most graceful subject, and if I am not too late may I tender my thanks for the very enjoyable evening I spent a few days since under your feet and under your charm.

Yours admiringly
With every good wish
SOLOMON J. SOLOMON

The card referred to was one of my Christmas cards, which I always had specially designed for myself, usually showing me in one of my characters. I have also a note from Sir George Alexander thanking me for my pretty card, and saying, "Believe me, we appreciate it very much, and have a sincere regard for you personally and an immense admiration for your talents."

One of the people who most faithfully sent me a card every year and received one in return was H.H. the Duke of Teck. This kind old gentleman was a very good friend to me, and always distinguished me by his notice when he saw me at any social function.

ADA DORÉE, JESSIE BOND, RUTLAND BARRINGTON AS MRS. PARTLET, CONSTANCE AND DR. DALY IN 'THE SORCERER'

The most noteworthy of these occasions was at the opening of the Grafton Galleries in Bond Street, when Barrington and I had played in a little musical piece, and I had taken the part of a housemaid. I was in the dressing-room after the performance, when a message was brought to me that the Duke wished to take me down to supper.

"I can't go," I said, aghast. "I have no other dress here, I can't go like this!"

But when my difficulty was made known to the Duke he overruled my objections, and sent word for me to come as I was. It was no ordinary function, nobilities and notabilities were there in gorgeous array, and dukes—except royal ones—were three a penny. Into this glittering assemblage I descended, my heart thumping under my muslin apron. But the Duke tucked me under his arm quite as a matter of course, and led me through the lines of bowing and curtsying grandees, a little maidservant in a print dress, on the arm of a most courtly and distinguished old gentleman, one of the handsomest members of the Royal Family.

It was a lovely story to tell Lewis, and I can assure you that it made him sit up and open his eyes! "I liked it," I said, "and I pretended I *was* a maidservant. It made them laugh."

I have another story to tell you about the Duke of Teck. The dear old man was always giving me presents and remembering me in some way or another, and once when he had just returned from a visit to Germany he came behind the scenes at the Savoy, and mysteriously told me he had brought back something for me.

"What is it?" I was on the tiptoe of expectation at once.

"Something very nice—something you can't get here." He led me on and on, rousing great hopes of a gift truly royal in splendour.

"Give it to me," I urged him, "be quick!"

So at last he rummaged in his pocket, and with immense fuss and ceremony fished out—a slice of crumbly cake! I was so disappointed that I dropped the messy stuff on the floor, quite regardless of manners or etiquette or diplomacy, or even the royal feelings!

CHAPTER XIII

WHEN one is happy and all goes smoothly life seems very uneventful, it is most often the unhappy people whose lives provide thrilling romances for happy ones to read. The next few years slipped imperceptibly away for me, I left the Savoy, but the ties that bound me there had been loosening for some time, and it was no great wrench. I played in other theatres; but I had now "arrived," and even success becomes monotonous. I had money now, a pleasant home and troops of friends—and of them always the most faithful, the most unwearying in kindness, was Lewis Ransome. Anxiety for the future, either as to ways and means or artistically, was a thing of the past; I was able to rest on my oars and take breath.

But with slackening of effort comes the realization of strain. I had worked hard night

and day for nearly twenty years—so hard that now when I look back on those years I often wonder how I got through them. Incessant study, rehearsals, performances ; social engagements which often kept me from my bed until the morning sun was shining. Clothes and household affairs to provide and keep going on a salary never quite adequate. At least seven performances every week, Sundays fully occupied, and only a fortnight's holiday in the year.

That time was over, but it had left its mark. One goes on just too long, and then falls in one's traces, and that began to happen to me. The monotony of saying and doing and singing the same things night after night and month after month deadened my brain ; sometimes I forgot a part I knew backwards, and all the frantic efforts of prompters and fellow-actors could not help me. Then I began to faint, all at once everything went dark, and down I fell on the stage like a dead thing. Sick leaves and short holidays did nothing but bolster me up for another few weeks, and then it began all over again.

Many of the letters I have preserved refer

to these recurring illnesses. "I have heard with sincere sorrow of your illness," writes Charles Voysey, and Gilbert says, "I am very sorry indeed to hear you have been ill. I've been confined to the house myself for some weeks past, and had no idea that your illness was so serious. I hope your health will benefit by a little sea-sideism. I shall be very glad indeed to see you back again, the Savoy is not itself without you." And again Gilbert says, "I am very much distressed to hear that you are so ill, and I hope that your contemplated rest may do you much good." And still again, "I am very sorry you have been ill. But the piece suffers so much when you are away, that any regrets I may express are open to the suspicion of interestedness."

Here is another letter referring to one of these periodical breakdowns :

28 DORSET SQUARE, N.W.
Jan. 6*th*

DEAR OLD JESSIE

Glad to hear you are better. If you are pining to see me (as I expect you are), come up after the theatre on Thursday with Neva

and have some supper. We have a young and old juvenile party on that night. Old Chibby can come up early (we begin at 8) and see my children play one of my pieces about 9.

Yours with Love

FATHER GROSSMITH

I am writing this to save Mrs. Gee Gee trouble. She sends her kindest regards.

Rest—rest and change—was always what the doctors counselled, how costly a prescription for a woman who has her own way to make and her living to earn ! One of these doctors invited me to his own house at Romney Marsh, and there I stayed for several weeks. It was the beginning of a friendship with Dr. and Mrs. Fancourt Barnes that has endured for forty years, and is still an unfailing source of kindness and pleasure to me. During that visit I made the acquaintance of a young man of whom you will be interested to hear.

My host and hostess were very musical, so of course we played and sang together a great deal, and my ability to read at sight especially pleased them and was often most useful. There was a youth of about fifteen years of age staying near them at that time who was also musical,

and my friends used to tell him how extraordinary was my facility for reading at sight, tales which he found it difficult to credit. He was himself a budding composer, and one day he brought me a sheaf of his own things, jotted roughly down on manuscript paper. Could I read them? Certainly I could, and did, to his overwhelming surprise and delight. I sang his songs and played his accompaniments while the enraptured young composer listened spellbound, charmed to hear his ideas interpreted with spirit and understanding. He never tired of hearing me sing or of hearing me talk; and he would sit literally at my feet, listening to stories of stage life, of musicians and composers, or of the celebrated people I had met.

When I returned to London I took some of his songs with me and sang them to Charles Santley. What did he think of them? I asked. Had the young man the right stuff in him?

"Oh, undoubtedly," Santley said. "Tell him to go on, tell him to go on."

That young man was Harry Pelissier, of the famous "Follies," so it was I who in a measure helped him to fame and fortune.

Now let me jump forward a good many years, when that fame and fortune had been secured. Harry Pelissier, no longer a slim youth, but a man of substance in more ways than one, had bought the house where he was born in the Finchley Road. Directly the purchase was completed he invited me to come with him and see his old home. We arrived. In the front garden was a huge raised bed, thickly planted with tulips, which were then a few inches above ground. The first thing he did—and I thought he had suddenly gone mad—was to rush at that mound and with his by no means fairy feet stamp every one of those poor tulips into the ground !

" Harry, Harry, what on earth are you doing, have you taken leave of your senses ? "

" If you only knew," he said, his explanation punctuated by stamps, " the smackings I had in my youth for walking over this damned bed of tulips, you'd appreciate my satisfaction—I'm taking my revenge now ! There—they're all smashed down, and I feel better ! "

Though I often was ill, I never quite gave up the ghost, as Sydney Grundy affects to have

feared in the following amusing note. The "two plump corpses" were a present of game I left at his door, with a message perhaps too laconic to be at once intelligible :

WINTER LODGE,
ADDISON ROAD, W.
11, 12, 91.

DEAR JESSIE BOND

I have heard of ghosts doing all sorts of funny things, but I never yet heard of them leaving their own funeral cards.

Imagine my dismay, when I found this on my desk :

"Miss Jessie Bond
Killed, 8 Dec."

And we are going to cook and eat her to-morrow ! I suppose, your companion is your poor sister. Many thanks for your plump corpses. They shall be cremated with every care.

When you come to see us in the flesh, please come on a Sunday. We are nearly always in, morning and afternoon, and it is such a weary day to get through, as a rule. Do come, on one of the ghastly Christmas holidays, when all the shops are shut, and one can only mope, and drink, and curse.

Sincerely yours
SYDNEY GRUNDY

His Christmas card to me, enclosing a portrait, says :

> May every heart her art has made less sad
> Unite to make the artist's heart more glad !

The four or five years between 1891 and 1896 were very happy ones for me, in spite of the shadow of illness, and my natural regret at the prospect of leaving the stage. There was Lewis always at my elbow to urge it, there were the doctors to advise it, but still I held on a little longer.

I was now living in a pleasant flat in the old " Fulham Fields " on the borders of Kensington, more spacious and more airy than my old City or Bloomsbury quarters. There I enjoyed spreading myself out and arranging all my household gods, and very beautiful and valuable some of them were. I had endless souvenirs of kind and gifted friends ; I had relics of my own past ; and from time to time I bought pictures and furniture which were possessions to be proud of. My dining-room was furnished with beautiful old oak, I had pictures by Morland and Constable, the two Wards, David James and Seymour Lucas.

The spinning wheel used by Phœbe in "The Yeomen of the Guard" stood in a corner of the drawing-room, and near it Mad Margaret's scarf tied to her rustic staff. There were sketches given to me by well-known artists, among them two by Mortimer Mempes, my very kind friend. It was a delightful little home, and many happy hours have I spent there, alone with my books and music, or entertaining the pleasant people who constituted my intimate circle. For the first time in my life I had leisure for social enjoyment without encroaching too much on the hours of work or rest. I loved entertaining and I loved visiting, in company so stimulating and amusing as it was then my privilege to enjoy.

I never visited much among my fellow-actors, or formed any close friendships with them. On the stage and during rehearsals I was always immersed in my parts, and took no interest in anything or anybody outside them, that is why I have comparatively few anecdotes to relate about the people with whom I was so intimately associated in my life as an actress. But as a woman I made many friend-

ships, often with men and women whose names most brightly adorn the pages of Victorian history. I met almost everybody of note in London in the houses I visited first as a professional singer, and afterwards as a guest: writers, painters, musicians, politicians, as well as non-professional people known only for their brilliant personal and social qualities.

Sir Morell Mackenzie was one of my intimate friends, for years he attended to my throat whenever that was necessary, and I was a constant visitor at his delightful Sunday evening musicals. Irving and Ellen Terry used often to be there, also Whistler, Mempes, Tosti and other well-known people.

I entertained a great deal myself, and kept open house on Sunday evenings, also on Sunday mornings, when my friends had a habit of dropping in for refreshment and a chat after church. There was always enough to eat and drink and a welcome for everybody, and what jolly Sundays we used to have! Lewis Ransome was a great feature of them in later years. He used to treat my house rather as if it were his own, even before we became

definitely engaged, and once he let me in for a terrible business. He brought in a sick man to rest for a while, who became so suddenly and seriously ill that he had to be put to bed and nursed and doctored for several weeks before he was able to be moved.

There was one very pleasant house at which I was often a guest—Frank Leo Schuster's, in Queen Anne's Gate. He gave musical At Homes on Sunday evenings, and delightful affairs they were, frequented by some of the most interesting people in London. In the lovely rooms of that house full of artistic treasures I sang and played among many other greater and lesser lights of the stage and the platform. Lady Randolph Churchill was one of Mr. Schuster's most constant visitors, and she and I often played duets together.

It was a happy time for me, and one of comparative ease, but still my health did not improve, and after one unusually bad fainting-fit my doctor told me with the utmost seriousness that if I had another I might never recover. It was, in fact, paralysis that threatened me —paralysis of the nerves from over-work. So

it must be good-bye to the stage or good-bye to life. And there was Lewis waiting as he had waited for twelve long years, dear patient man! I *must* leave the stage, there was no choice now; and would I marry him? Yes, I would.

He hardly believed me, I think: I had always been so elusive, he feared I would slip through his fingers yet.

Gilbert, Sullivan and Carte were reunited, and I had gone back to the Savoy for a revival of "Mikado," playing my old part of Pitti Sing. Here is a letter from Gilbert showing how completely our friendship had survived the ups and downs of the last few years, and how, up to the very last days of my stage life, he tried to work the oracle on my behalf, and improve the parts in which I appeared.

GRIM'S DYKE
HARROW WEALD
15 *August* 94

MY DEAR JESSIE

Thank you for your note. I was afraid you were angry with me and didn't want to be brought into contact with me. I am very

glad that it is not so. I look upon no piece that I am connected with as complete unless you are in the cast, and I have fought hard for you at the Savoy. The part—always an extremely good one—has been improved for your benefit and I feel sure you will be pleased with it.

Yours always
W. S. GILBERT

When "Mikado" was revived, none of us knew that when its run was over Jessie Bond would leave the stage for ever. I kept the bitter fact secret as far as possible, for it *was* bitter, though I was going to make a happy marriage. When I told Gilbert he was so angry that I don't think he ever quite forgave me; he would not accept my health as an excuse, he was unreasonable, as, alas, he often was!

"You are a little fool!" he said.

"I have often heard you say you don't like old women," I retorted. "*I* shall soon be old. Will you provide for me? Will Sir Arthur? Will Carte? No, of course you won't. Well, I am going to marry a man who *will*."

That silenced him, but still he would not forgive. Neither he nor Sir Arthur sent me a

wedding present, though Carte did, a very beautiful diamond bangle with this inscription engraved in the narrow gold band :

"To Jessie Bond in remembrance of long and pleasant association in her artistic triumphs, from Hebe to Pitti Sing (second edition), May 20th, 1897, from Richard D'Oyley Carte and Helen D'Oyley Carte."

Looking back on that long connection with the Triumvirate, I see more clearly than ever I did how autocratic they were in their dealings with us, and how they tried to bind us hand and foot. In that they never succeeded with me—I was too determined, too fearless and outspoken. Never being afraid—that was my safeguard. The others *were* afraid, some of them were perfectly abject, and of course that sort of thing strengthens tyrants in their tyranny. Not that I want to represent us as downtrodden slaves—far from it. They were kindness itself in many ways, but they certainly treated us more as soldiers to be commanded, or even as neophytes under a vow, than as human entities.

Well, one can't have everything : they were

three most brilliant men, under whom it is a privilege to have worked ; and if their own brilliance and masterful abilities blinded them a little to other people's point of view—we are all human.

That last night of "Mikado"—can I ever forget it? Tears were running down my face as we neared the end, I could hardly sing.

"What's the matter with Jessie Bond?" Lewis Ransome heard some one say, sitting near him in the front of the stalls.

"Oh, she's upset because they haven't given her a part in the next opera," was the reply.

Down came the curtain, and it was all over. Twenty years of hard work, twenty years of fun and frolic and jolly companionship, twenty years of living in an atmosphere of tuneful nonsense, with the glare of the footlights in my eyes and the thunders of applause in my ears. How terribly I should miss it all! And domesticity, that all my life I had fled from, had caught me at last.

CHAPTER XIV

SOME weeks ago I was reading about the way in which the Germans have mangled "The Mikado." They have turned it into a revue and, to make it really up-to-date, they have introduced wireless, motor-cars, aeroplanes and syncopation. Nanki-Poo is now an American sugar king's son, Katisha is a Japanese fruit merchant's daughter, and Ko-Ko is mixed up, so I read, with marmalade trusts and a "Union of Dictators."

It is dreadful that such things should happen. It is horrible that vulgar people should lay hands on our dear old operas and try to drag them down to the gutter. But reading about these desecrations did set me thinking. Have we clean hands—quite clean hands—even in England? Ought we to pretend we are shocked when we, too, have been letting the "jazz spirit" creep in, little

by little, into our own Gilbert and Sullivan Opera ?

Nothing like what the Germans have done, of course, would ever be allowed over here. Yet you do not know how it grieves me when I see the mannerisms, tricks and antics which seem to have been made part of our present-day performances, and which would never, never, have been tolerated for a moment at the Savoy.

Let us take my own favourite part—poor little Mad Margaret in " Ruddigore." Why, oh ! why, must she be played like a raving, screaming lunatic, whose only place should be the asylum ? Margaret is not a mad girl really. She is a distraught girl—a genuine creature of pity, possibly—but a wild maniac she most certainly is not on any possible showing.

" 'Tis only
That I'm
Love-lonely !
That's all."

In those few, simple words, which are really the key to the reading of the part, she tells her own story Love-loneliness—that is her

trouble. She is just a sad, solitary figure whose head has been turned crazy, but not demented, by heart-hungry grief. Suggesting her as a wild-eyed gabbling idiot is not only inartistic, but it shows a woeful mis-reading of the spirit of the part.

Some people say that Mad Margaret is a kind of tragic Ophelia. She is not, and was never meant to be, a kind of Ophelia. When I created the rôle I was dressed as a simple country girl in a country girl's rags and I carried a rough piece of stick. I was not arrayed in white chiffon—how could she possibly afford such a dress?—nor was it considered necessary for me to carry a sheaf of straw mingled with poppies. Why should one sing to poppies when one is dreaming of "only roses—only roses"?

In the second act I used to have a severely simple black dress, a severely simple poked bonnet covering my severely straight hair, and had pattens hung on my wrists. I was still, you see, just a plain country girl, in whose head there was not a thought of vanity. All I dare do was to look up wonderingly and beseech-

RUTLAND BARRINGTON AND JESSIE BOND AS SIR DESPARD MURGATROYD AND MAD MARGARET IN 'RUDDIGORE'

ingly at Despard Murgatroyd. We were both terribly, terribly solemn, but to say that we were terribly solemn does not say that Barrington and I were not, in our odd way, very amusing.

To-day the Mad Margarets, though they may still dress in black, bedeck themselves with all sorts of little frills and furbelows, show the choicest of curls peeping from under their bonnets, and act with an exaggerated voice and gesture never meant for the part. To my mind it is all quite wrong. Margaret is not the kind of girl who would spend a couple of hours before the looking-glass tricking herself up to make herself "Frenchy."

Then there is the case of Phœbe in "The Yeomen of the Guard." What I hate is that senseless "business" in "Were I thy bride." You know what I mean—the scratching of the jailer's chin, the ruffling of his hair, the ogling of the eyes, and all those other "comic" antics which, goodness knows why, are supposed to be "funny."

I think it is wicked that there should be this vulgarity in one of the loveliest of all the songs

in the operas. Sir William Gilbert would not have endured it for a moment. He intended that the audience should hear his most beautiful lyric—and they never hear it to-day. Sir Arthur Sullivan would not have stood it either. The air he had written was far too sweet to be drowned beneath silly laughter.

During the rehearsals I remember that Gilbert asked me—he was only a man, and perhaps didn't know !—how I would wheedle Wilfred Shadbolt. "Well, Mr. Gilbert," I answered, "I might just gently stroke his chin, and I might . . ." He stopped me. "That will do !" he exclaimed, "that will be splendid !" You see what he meant ! He wanted the wheedling suggested, but he did not want a lot of low comedy introduced, and still less did he want the action to mar the effect of the song.

I remember something else. W. H. Denny was too good an artist to take any licence, but as he was seated on the floor, he once looked up slightly in a rather humorous way. "Mr. Denny," I said sharply, "I won't have any movement while I'm singing my song." And

Shadbolt never did sway about or do any of that dreadful ogling—at the Savoy. Why should he? We knew well enough in those days that this so-called broad humour added nothing to a really beautiful song.

Now a word or two—only a word or two—about the men's parts. Who, I want to know, intended that the Mikado should prance about like a madman, hissing out his lines like a serpent? Never Gilbert! The very thought would make him turn in his grave. Never poor Dick Temple! The raving monster we so often see now is not one bit like the suave and oily Mikado he created at the Savoy.

Temple's Mikado was—as we might put it —"every inch a gentleman." In his quiet, refined way he made you feel that here, despite the grim and sardonic streak in his nature, was really a fatherly ruler and a "true philanthropist." Who possibly could believe that of present-day Mikados stalking about like a demon with leering eyes and ugly evil grimaces? When Temple sang about

"My object all sublime
I shall achieve in time"

he sang it in a smooth, unforced voice in which every syllable told, and all he did was to clasp and unclasp his hands and smile pleasantly like a kind-hearted despot. When he spoke of " boiling oil " he did not shriek like a fury. The lurid words seemed just to drop off easily from an oily tongue. That was where he was so much an artist. He knew that the real humour was in Gilbert's words, and he had no need to force it out, which is something rarely understood by the present generation of players.

But I could go on picking out details of the same kind from most of the operas. Here are two apparently small matters which show how a false line can be taken even in little things. Why do Elsie and Phœbe make a Court curtsy in " The Yeomen of the Guard " quartet and why do Tessa and Gianetta do the same thing in the second act of " The Gondoliers " ? They were just poor girls who would never know how to make such a curtsy. In " Princess Ida " its introduction is far more appropriate. Under Gilbert such a social blunder would never have happened.

I fear the real trouble is that, while we in our day were taught always to be refined and reposeful, the aim to-day is all towards over-acting, even though exaggeration often conflicts with the real spirit of the parts. Take the case of the Duke of Plaza-Toro. Why should he be made a kind of jumping Jack-in-the-box? Why should he have the very bad manners to "pull faces" at the back of the Duchess? Frank Wyatt, who created the rôle, would have been the last man to be guilty of such a liberty. The Duke, who is a courtier and distinctly a man of gentle birth and breeding, though for a time he may be down on his luck, would positively never do such a thing.

What I do want you to understand is that I am not blaming any of the present artists individually. Not at all! I am an old woman now—very nearly seventy-seven, you know!—and I love doing whatever I can to help those who have taken our places in these beautiful operas! I do not say that, because we played in a certain way, that way is therefore the right way. But I do say that our way was Gilbert's way—and that Gilbert, a real master of stage-

craft, knew when he was rehearsing us what he was doing.

No: the fault is the "system." The London audiences of our day expected refinement and "polish." In the provinces, where the subtlety of Gilbert's humour may not have been so easily grasped, the touring companies, I imagine, had to play on much "broader" lines than would have ever been allowed at the Savoy. So little by little innovations crept in, antics that drew a laugh became part of the accepted interpretation, and each new artist tried, if he or she were not actually encouraged, to "go one better." And this "going one better" has gone on so long unchecked that the operas are being absolutely spoilt by over-acting and low comedy.

CHAPTER XV

ALTHOUGH I had promised to marry Lewis Ransome, I am sure he never thought I would come up to the scratch, and the only time I ever saw him excited and beyond himself was the night before our wedding, when he realized that he had got me at last. And even then, little wretch that I was, I gave him another fright!

We were to be married at nine o'clock in the morning, at The Boltons church; Lewis lived in Edwardes Square and I in the Palace Mansions, so we were both of that parish. I wanted a registry office wedding, but Lewis's parents would not hear of it. They had not at first welcomed me as a member of their family, that was one reason why I held off; I had no wish, and there was certainly no need, to force myself on anybody. They were Quakers and I was an actress, so their attitude was natural

enough. But poor Lewis was so unhappy and made himself such a nuisance at home that his sister came to me as ambassador at last and begged me to marry him, because he really was getting impossible to live with ! So *I* was supposed to take him on !

All this time I'm leaving the poor man waiting for me in the church. I was quite punctual, perhaps even a minute or so more than punctual, so the naughty idea struck me of giving my patient suitor a last shock, and I told the driver to go two or three times round the square before stopping. They told me afterwards that Lewis got into a dreadful state when I didn't arrive, and thought all was over between us ! But we were duly married, and lived together for twenty-five happy years, so a few shocks to begin with only made him more thankful for the peace which came after.

As I got into the carriage to drive away, my new father-in-law said to me, " I hope you are going to be faithful to Lewis, Jessie." Such a tactful remark—but then, I was an actress, you see, a " very abandoned person," and

they were Quakers. My costume at least was unobjectionable; I was married in a serge coat and skirt and straw hat, so it could hardly have been quieter, and we left our respective families hoping for the best but fearing the worst on the steps of the church, and by eleven o'clock were well on our way to Paris.

Our first home was in Gilston Road, The Boltons, but when we had been there about four months we had to turn out of it, because the drains were defective and we all became ill. Our furniture was stored, and we went to live with my husband's parents, my Quaker parents-in-law, and there we stayed for eighteen months. Yes, and we never had one unpleasant word! I do think that deserves to be recorded, and put to the credit of Jessie Bond, actress, as well as to that of Mr. and Mrs. Ransome, senior, Quakers. There had to be forbearance on both sides, of course, but never did the slightest breeze ruffle the calm current of our lives. They had objected to me at first, but seeing Lewis so set on the marriage, and afterwards so happy in it, they took me to their hearts like sensible people, and showed me

what stuff God-fearing, quiet-living Quakers were made of.

Lewis was very proud of his family record, especially of that final " e " of his name, and it annoyed him very much when people omitted it in writing. It seems that the *Ransomes* were all Quakers, as distinguished from the common or garden Ransoms, and in the days when Quakers were persecuted some of the less steadfast of them dropped the final " e " for the sake of safety and obscurity. But that my husband's family never would do, they stood their ground and took their hard knocks like men and Quakers.

When we had been married about two years the business (of manufacturing wood-working machinery) in which my husband and his father were interested was moved down to Newark-on-Trent. The lease of their factory in King's Road, Chelsea, had run out, and land so near London had become too valuable for them to renew it, or to rent other premises. So down we went to Newark with our furniture and all our belongings, and I did not fail to assure my long-suffering husband that I never

would have married him if I had known he would take me away from London.

Farndon, our new home at Newark-on-Trent, was quite a country place, three miles out of the town, and the garden was a great delight to us both after our long residence in London. All our new interests kept us very happy and busy, my husband was fond of country life, and was now able to indulge his sporting tastes, as well as the taste for home and domesticity so long thwarted. He hunted with the Belvoir, Rufford, and Lord Harrington's hounds, and all the hunt lunches and shooting parties made a gay life for me also. We entertained a good deal, and gave hunt lunches and shooting parties of our own, so my time was well filled up, and I missed London less than I could have believed.

One of my devices for imparting a London flavour to the new surroundings was to buy a hansom cab and drive about the country in it, to the astonishment of the natives, and it was always my impulse to go and pay the driver when I alighted—another little joke that helped to brighten our lives.

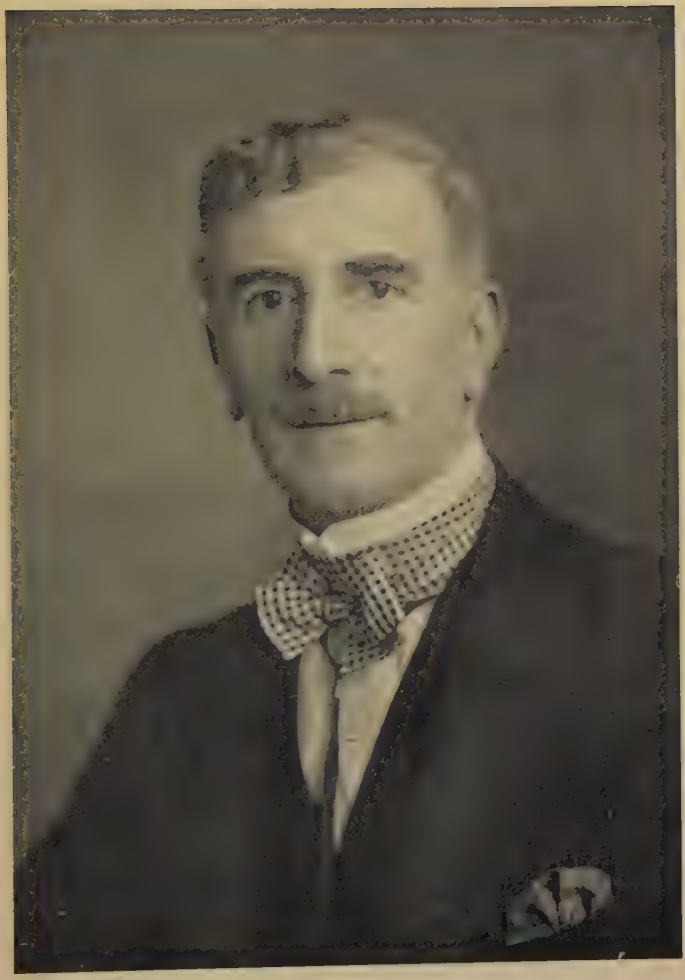
It was indeed a change for a hard-working actress, but I settled well into my new rôle, and played it, I believe, with success ; indeed, I know that my husband was a happy and much-envied man, in spite of my vagaries and my love of teasing.

" I never know what you'll do next, Jessie," the poor man used to exclaim in despair.

" My dear, I don't want you to," was my reply.

" Spirits in Bond," they used to call me in London, and with renewed health, leisure, and everything I needed to make me happy, I kept my husband alive and our friends amused.

Nor was our life one-sided, for Lewis was a churchwarden and interested in parish affairs, and I did my share in helping him there also. One of my interests was the founding of an Amateur Dramatic Club, and it was a great pleasure to organize the performances, and to teach and direct the local players. Our productions were sometimes on quite an ambitious scale, as you will realize when I tell you that among them were " Sweet Lavender " and " Milestones," so that I was able at last to gratify my love of serious acting by training



LEWIS RANSOME

others, if not by acting myself. We used to give very charming little entertainments, the source of much pleasure to both actors and audiences, and of profit to local charities.

My husband was himself very musical in an amateur way, he sang and played by ear with delightful sweetness and taste, and even composed little songs and melodies, though, as he did not know the notes or rules of music, I had to write them down for him. For one of his songs he wrote the words as well as the music, but I must tell you in my own despite that he wrote the verses *before* we were married, and never composed a single ode to me afterwards !

This effort of his was kept for home use, but at a charity concert in Newark I sang it as an encore, to his great astonishment. I can see him now, as he sat just below the platform, leaning forward in surprise when he heard the first few notes of the introduction, and his dear big eyes opening wider and wider. There was a tremendous encore, which pleased him immensely, and I am so glad to remember that my own rendering of it gave him such pride and pleasure. These are the words :

Sleep, darling, sleep, Night draws her mantle round,
Hushed is the world and still, wrapped in a peace profound.
Darkening shadows close, hiding the earth from sight,
Nature invites repose, sweet be thy dreams, good night.

Sleep then and take thy rest now the day's toil is done,
Slumber and wake refreshed, and when the morning sun
Gilds the pale heavens with light, wake, my love, wake once more—
Till then, good night.

My dear husband, the memory of his deep and tender love for me is the most abiding joy of my life. The triumph and the shouting dies, but his constant and devoted love warms my heart and comforts me even now. I have been greatly blessed and greatly honoured, and to have won such affection is more to me than all my laurels.

He admired me so, he thought there was no one like me, and my music was to him an inexhaustible delight. "Sing, Little Mother, sing," he used to say, and in his last illness I would leave his door open and sing and play to him for hours.

"Little Mother," he often called me, and it

was a name used by many of my friends from the time when Iolanthe, Strephon's young and lovely mother, caused such heart-burning and scepticism among his intimate circle.

Happiness has no history, and you would not be interested in detailed description of a life that we both found entirely satisfactory. We spent many winters abroad, that my husband might enjoy the skating and mountain sports at which he was an adept (he had won both the Great and the Little Bear). We went often to London, and kept ourselves in touch with the world of the stage and society. Naturally visits to the theatre were my greatest joy, but Lewis did not always appreciate them as much as I did. He had settled down as a quiet country gentleman himself, and liked to think that I was an equally inconspicuous country lady; so that when we entered a theatre together and there was a whispering, a nudging, cries of "Jessie!" and then a burst of cheering from all over the house, the poor man used to get quite upset.

"Hang it all, I wish they wouldn't," he would mutter uncomfortably.

"You can sit down, my dear man, it's nothing to do with *you*," I would say airily, and push him into his seat, while I stood bowing and kissing my hand and thoroughly enjoying myself.

Such receptions were not very surprising while I was still comparatively young and had not long left the stage; but one night quite lately, since my husband's death, I was in London and went to a performance of "Ruddigore" at the Princes Theatre. Dame Madge Kendal had gone in just before me, and she was followed by Mr. Baldwin, then Prime Minister, accompanied by the Premier of Canada. These great people were greeted with applause; but when Jessie Bond appeared, a little white-haired woman quietly dressed in black, the whole house rose to its feet, and there was a hurricane of cheers. And that after thirty years! London audiences have long memories and affectionate hearts. It was all I could do to face them and keep my self-possession, I was deeply touched and quite overcome.

Still more recently I received a letter from a

country village in far-away Australia, thanking me for the pleasure I had given to an old playgoer in the palmy days of the Savoy. Parts of this letter are sufficiently interesting to the public to be quoted, and I hope that my friend in Glenorchy, Victoria, will see this book and know that his letter made me feel proud and pleased.

"I was a first-nighter at the production of 'The Gondoliers,'" he says, "and saw it and the others many times. Perhaps you will remember that, on the night of the production of 'The Gondoliers,' the two kings sang the duet 'Replying we sing as one individual' as a *duet*, and not in the comical way they afterwards sang it. I suppose I am the only man in Australia who was in the Savoy that night. I shall never forget till my dying day the inspiration of the music, singing, and dancing of the Castanet chorus. If it was exhausting to you, it was exhilarating to your eager listeners.

"It always seemed to me a pity that 'Ruddigore' was not a more pronounced success. Your part and Mr. Rutland Barrington's were very fine, and there were many lyrics in it,

that should not be lost. I especially recollect your comical duet, near the close of the opera, 'I once was a most abandoned person,' in which you finish with

'And now I rule a national school,
The duties are dull, but I am not complaining.'

"The truth expresses itself sometimes, as I find myself as an old man of nearly sixty-seven, after a very bright and happy life, quite alone in a very out-of-the-way hamlet, working for the uplift of society, and sometimes saying to myself 'the duties are dull, but I'm not complaining.'"

My correspondent concludes with a sentence that greatly touched me. "I thought that before I passed on to the great unknown, I should endeavour to express to you the joy that Miss Jessie Bond's singing, dancing and acting brought into my life."

Tributes like these, and others that still come my way, make me feel that I have not lived in vain.

CHAPTER XVI

SIR ARTHUR SULLIVAN died in 1900, and for years I had seen neither him nor Gilbert. Sullivan, I knew, had lost interest in me when I was no longer a satellite, but my friendship with Gilbert had always been strong and sincere, and it troubled me to feel that there was a shadow over it. The queer man had, as I said before, deeply resented my leaving the stage.

"Lewis," I said to my husband during one of our periodical sojourns in London, "I should so much like to see Sir William Gilbert again. I think I must write and propose a visit."

He agreed with me, and I wrote to Lady Gilbert, receiving a very kind note in reply asking me to come to lunch and spend the day with them. She sent the carriage to the station for me, and I found them both well, and as charming to me as ever.

After lunch, when we were walking in the garden together, and near the lake where soon afterwards he met his death, I said to Gilbert :

" Haven't you ever forgiven me for getting married, Sir William ? "

" Married," he said, " *are* you married ? "

That was so characteristic of him ; anything he did not want to happen, or wish to believe, had no existence in his mind.

" Of course I'm married," I retorted sharply. " You know I am. I've been married for fifteen years."

He shrugged his shoulders. " Let me see," he said. " I never sent you a wedding present, did I ? I must do that now."

Soon after there arrived at Farndon a magnificent silver bowl which I still have, engraved with the names of all the operas I had appeared in, and my parts in them. With it came a note :

GRIM'S DYKE
HARROW WEALD
2 *Jan.* 1911

MY DEAR JESSIE

I am sending you a Birthday present, a

MRS. LEWIS RANSOME

Wedding present, and a New Year's present. All Rolled into One !

With every good wish
Affectionately yours
W. S. GILBERT

Dear Sir William Gilbert, within three months of that day he was dead.

I am one of the last who knew him well, certainly the very last who worked with him and Sullivan to materialize the children of their brains. I hear them criticized, explained, accounted for—often wrongly, as I think. Who can understand them as I do, I who saw them together shaping out their ideas at rehearsal after rehearsal, and worked with them day after day and year after year, as I did ? Gilbert has come in for much criticism lately that I think unjust ; he was quick-tempered, often unreasonable, and he could not bear to be thwarted, but how anyone could call him unamiable I cannot understand. Those who do, I think, can never have known him personally. In all our association of twenty years I never saw him show temper, he controlled his irritations and impatiences as a

gentleman should. He was always kindness itself to me ; and, though it is true that he had a special liking for me, I don't for a moment suppose that others less distinguished by his regard were differently treated.

I am sure it must have disappointed and pained Gilbert to experience the distinctions that were made between him and Sullivan. To begin with : Sullivan was knighted years before him ; and that, so far as the honour was conferred on the composer of the operas, was certainly unfair. In my opinion Gilbert was the greater man, for he was the originator and inspirer. He always had a picture of the whole play clear in his mind before ever it came to rehearsal, he was indefatigable, no detail was too small for his attention ; he knew exactly what he wanted, and laboured untiringly to make all of us, including Sir Arthur, conform to his idea. He rounded us up like the taskmaster he was, and there was no escape until he was satisfied. Perhaps this grim determination to impose his own conception was galling to Sullivan ; but Gilbert was the worker, the driving force, and his energy carried all before it.

It was his idea that often gave birth to Sullivan's music ; he did not know one note from another himself, but always he could tell how a tune ought to go, the character, the rhythm of it. I've heard him myself, not once, but many times, saying :

" Look here, Sullivan, it ought to go like this—rum ti tum ti tum tum tum," and the other, the musician, would catch up the idea and work on it. There is one particular instance that I well remember. Sullivan had great difficulty in fitting music to the unusual verse form of " I have a song to sing O," in " The Yeomen of the Guard," and one day when he and Sullivan were talking it over Gilbert said :

" But, my dear fellow, it should go on and on and on and on like the House that Jack built," making motions with his hands and humming in his tuneless voice, until he got Sir Arthur to seize the idea. I saw and heard that myself.

It is a curious fact that Sullivan had much the same experience with Sir Henry Irving when writing the incidental music for " Mac-

beth," as he did when setting Gilbert's lyric, and at about the same time. Irving knew no more than Gilbert did of music, or could hum a tune correctly to save his life, yet he also had a very clear conception of what was needed to illustrate the action and meaning of the play. When Sullivan played over the first draft of his music to Irving, the great actor shook his head. "It's beautiful music, my dear fellow, but it won't do at all, I'm sorry to say." "Can't you give me an idea of what you *do* want?" Sullivan asked him, and with nods and waving of hands and tuneless humming Irving conveyed his meaning to the musician's sensitive brain and heard it translated into melody.

Another great injustice, in fact an unpardonable slight on Gilbert, was the omission of his name from the programme of the Command Performance at Windsor.

To me it seems the most ungenerous and unjust action imaginable. What would the whole thing have been without Gilbert, how could "The Gondoliers," with all its quaint inversions and good-natured fun poked at those in high places, ever have existed?

Didn't the Queen herself enjoy his jokes and sly digs at Royalty as much as she enjoyed Sullivan's music, as I saw with my own eyes? And to think that the one who inspired all that merriment and melody should have been ignored! I cannot understand the mental processes of those who deliberately did it, or admire the spirit of those who permitted it to be done. Gilbert was too truly a gentleman to retaliate or openly resent, but there is no doubt at all that that slight, and others to which he was subjected, cut him deeply. It is always the man of finest breeding and most sensitive temperament who goes to the wall in such contests.

Sullivan owed his entrance into society and his knighthood to his great friendship with the Duke of Edinburgh, whose musical tastes are well known; but it is doubtful if the influence of those in high places was altogether beneficial to his art. His serious music gave him a wider range of interests than Gilbert; but in opera he never succeeded apart from Gilbert, and when the partnership was dissolved the two other members of it found they could not do without him. Gilbert had been the inspirer,

the projector, the Idea that ran through all the concern. Nothing went well after he left; Sullivan's operas, the great new theatre that was to be built and house a National Opera —all were failures. Together they were invincible, separately they were only the component parts of a frayed strand.

It could not last for ever, that ideal partnership; long before the end there were signs of friction, and no after patching-up was successful. They were both such strong and talented men that perhaps the wonder is that they worked together so long, and submitted to the inevitable give and take of partnership. Each one thought himself *the* one, and there was a continual jealousy of words against music as the operas were evolved; but neither was superior to the other or complete alone, though if either must be put first it should be Gilbert, the inspirer.

Am I partial? I don't think so; they are both dead now and I shall join them soon; all these contentions and bitternesses are done with for us all, and I can look back on them calmly and without prejudice.

CHAPTER XVII

WE had had twenty-five years of married happiness when Mr. Ransome's health began to fail. He was eight years my junior, and I had always taken it for granted that he would outlive me ; I could not believe that I was to lose the kindest, most loving husband that ever a woman had. Our happy, care-free life was over : for him came pain, weakness, the domination of doctors and nurses ; and for me an ever-deepening shadow of grief.

We tried everything ; finally I took him to Mentone ; but he got worse and worse, and at last I had to bring him back to England, a dying man. An awful experience that journey was. He was too weak to go on to Newark, so I took him to a nursing home in London, and there he died on the 22nd of May, 1922. It was only two days after our silver wedding-day, his room was full of flowers and presents, and

they were still arriving when the gifts and bouquets of congratulation had to give place to funeral wreaths.

For me it was a cruel blow. Never had anyone a happier married life than I, and I am proud to know that I made him happy also. His long devotion was rewarded, he loved his home with me in it, and the talents and brightness that I then devoted to him and our guests, instead of making them common property. He had always been jealous of the public, poor dear Lewis !

I went back to Farndon, and stayed there for two years with my sister to bear me company, but the emptiness of life without my husband there was terrible. I could not have borne it much longer, but it was brought to an end independently of me—to a sudden and shattering end. The business in which the Ransomes were interested came to grief, and everything had to go ; I sold my house and furniture and left Newark. After a period of wandering and indecision I came to Worthing, where I have settled down and made a little home for myself, and hope to end my days in peace.

Peace—is that what we all wish for at last, even I, with my record of such strenuous, vivid, varied life? But, old as I am, stagnation wearies me, I enjoy the quiet comfort of my home, but only for a breathing-space, between frequent visits to London, where I really live again. There I stay at my club and see my friends, and enjoy a taste of the old gay life once more. They gather round me then, old friends who remember Jessie Bond in her prime, and young ones who are not too modern and self-sufficient to do homage to a woman who has fought hard and won her place in theatrical history. I am "somebody" in London yet, and the greatest pleasure that life still holds is to enjoy for the brief time that my strength permits the old atmosphere of interest and adulation, to be fêted and entertained for what I was and have done, if not for what I am.

But there's life in the old dog yet, as you would realize if you saw the playbill of an entertainment given at the Lyceum Club, Piccadilly, on May 7th, 1929, whereon I appear as producer of one of the plays. And

just a year ago, again at the Lyceum, a select number of guests assembled for a "Young Musicians' Dinner, Arranged by the Music Board in Honour of Miss Jessie Bond."

That was a compliment that pleased and touched me to the heart, from young things who never knew me except by repute, and yet were moved by artistic fellow-feeling to do me a public and signal honour.

To my young entertainers, and all others treading the toilsome path of artistic effort, I wish success and happiness. I have myself experienced such intense joy of life, such exhilaration and inspiration from its very difficulties, that I can heartily encourage them, and envy them that their strivings and successes are before them, instead of behind them, like mine.

Who is it that says, "It is more blessed to travel than to arrive"? That is most true, it is the effort, the fight, the reaching out to grasp a perfection that ever beckons and ever eludes, which is real felicity and never turns to ashes in the mouth. I wonder sometimes if the young ones realize this—perhaps we never

do when we are young—but there seems to be now a slackening of effort among young artists, a disposition to be too easily satisfied, to run in grooves and neglect the wider training, and to depend too much on looks and legs as factors of success. No doubt I shall be told I am old-fashioned, but I can only say what I feel.

The artistic life, the life of the stage, of music and drama, is its own great reward, it is a glorious profession, there is no doubt of that. Certainly it is also an exacting one, but it brings in its train the highest of pleasures, the most varied experiences, and the most satisfying results. But it must be taken seriously, one must work. It is not enough to display beautiful dresses and shapely limbs, and to gain adulation from men. All that side of it passes swiftly—too swiftly—but the joy of the artist remains. To study hard and unceasingly, letting no smallest detail escape, to train body and mind unflinchingly towards the ideal, and then to forget dress, appearance, everything ; and *be* absolutely the part one is playing—that is happiness indeed. Reward comes at

once and in generous measure, the intoxicating music of applause, the feeling that hundreds of eyes are watching every gesture, hundreds of ears drinking in every word, and that one is not only tickling the jaded palates of connoisseurs in legs and costumes, but touching the humblest and simplest heart at the back of the gallery. That is a great experience, it goes to the head like champagne—the experience of swaying a great crowd of people and making them *feel*.

It was my greatest joy to see the people weeping when as Iolanthe I sang my song to the Lord Chancellor, and to know that, while I so often made them laugh, I could make them cry too, and appeal to the deepest sentiments of the human heart as well as cheer it by gay nonsense. Is that not a worthy ambition—to cheer, to amuse, to please? I remember that when I lived in Palace Mansions and was still on the stage, I received a visit from Lady Plumer, wife of General Sir William Plumer, as he was then, who occupied a flat in the same mansions. She was very kind and very complimentary, but she thought it was such a

pity that with my great talents I could not employ them in a higher walk of life. I said, "Lady Plumer, God has given me these gifts and I use them to the best of my ability. I give many people pleasure—and I have to live."

Yes, I should love to have my life all over again, sorrows and all, for they were bound up with the joys and all made me richer in experience. It was joy to work in the creative atmosphere I worked in, to see new conceptions shaping themselves and take my own share in giving them life, throwing all my heart and soul into the task.

Mine was perhaps a unique experience, for I played in London for twenty years without a break; no tours, no "rests," no slackening except for one brief holiday of a fortnight every year. In that I know I may be envied by many whose "rests" are more frequent than they care for; nevertheless, I think the hard work, self-denial, and abstention that characterized my life as a young actress, would frighten many of them now.

Do not let it frighten you, it brings its own

great reward, and helps to ennoble the glorious profession to which we belong, in which the achievement of the individual enriches the whole. Conversely, the deficiencies of its members, either on the stage or in private life, lower its status in the public eye, and it saddens me to know how far it has descended to be a mere marriage market—or market of a kind that I will not name—and prelude to the divorce or criminal court. Young artists, make a stand against that taint, raise your profession and let it raise you. It brings you in contact with the highest as well as the lowest in human nature; learn from both and don't let the lower triumph.

Young artists, my successors—my much-envied successors—this is my final word, this and my thanks to the warm-hearted, generous public whose applause was the food of my spirit for so many years. The play is over, the curtain must ring down. I have lived my life, I leave it with regret. May you all be happy as I have been, and feel to the end

> That Death, whene'er he call,
> Must call too soon.

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